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OFF THE SKELLIGS.

By JEAN INGELOW.

CHAPTER XVII.

"But to me a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.—*Goldsmith*."

AFTER dinner I generally made a point of retiring to my cabin as to a drawing-room, while Uncle Rollin and Tom sat over their wine. That night they sent Mrs. Brand to fetch me back, saying that it was dull for me to sit alone.

It had been raining, the deck was damp and cheerless, so they had settled themselves below for the evening, and I was glad to obey the summons and join them. They were deep in talk, Tom explaining, my uncle continually falling into mistakes. The subject of the discussion was Mr. Brandon and his family.

"The old man," Tom said, "is Brandon's stepfather."

"Why, I thought you said he was the father of that widow lady whom Brandon spoke of."

"So I did, sir, but not by the same mother."

"Well, I cannot make it out. I hardly see how the second wife could have married three times in the course of so few years."

"I'll just explain it to you as Brandon did to me. His mother, then quite a young woman, married a Mr. Brandon, who did not live till this son was born. Mr. Mortimer was her guardian, and is Brandon's trustee as well as his stepfather. Well, when she had been a widow two years, she married a Mr. Grant, a Scotch minister, and they had three daughters, one of whom is married and gone to India. This Mr. Grant died when his wife was about thirty, and Brandon was about seven years old."

"Well, that was about twenty years ago."

"Twenty-one years ago. Then in due time she married this fine old man. I suppose he was about sixty—nearly twice her age—and they had one son. So, you see, Brandon, the Grants, and young Mortimer are all related. What you were confused about was the

daughter of the old man by his former marriage, for he was a widower. She, you know, is only related to the young son, but they all call her sister, by way of respect, I suppose. She is between fifty and sixty."

"What, four families, and all live together?"

"So it seems; but in point of numbers it is not at all an overwhelming household."

"It's not the number, boy, but the quarrelling."

"They don't seem to quarrel, though the mother is dead. Mr. Mortimer is fond of his step-children. He must be a most amiable old fellow, I am sure. Brandon says he never saw him till after the wedding, when he patted him on the head and gave him a sovereign. That, running off to spend it, he met some gipsies in a lane and showed it to them, whereupon they persuaded him to buy a young donkey of them with it. He said he rode the miserable little beast home, and, being afraid it would be taken from him, actually managed to get it up the back stairs without being observed, and secreted it in a light closet in his bed-room. The circumstance was not discovered till the next morning, when the bride and bridegroom were awake by its tremendous braying. He was delighted at his mother's marriage."

"Odd, for he knew already what a stepfather was."

"But his experience of stepfathers seems to have been peculiar, for when I asked him if he remembered Grant, he said, 'Yes, he used to make Grant rig ships for him, and play with him when his mother was ill; in return for which he was expected to learn hymns and come into the study to say his prayers.'

So the conversation ended. I have often felt pleasure in hearing anecdotes about the childhood of people whom I cared for and looked up to. One sees them thus under a new aspect, and feels a kind of tenderness towards them, as they were in those far-off days. I felt it then towards that little curly-headed urchin at his pranks; but when Uncle Rollin said, "Deep in thought, Dorothea? What are you musing about?" I was startled, and could not reply, "I was thinking about Mr. Brandon," for Tom had made it awkward for me even to mention his name. There was the real pity. He had put thoughts into my head that teased me. I did not like to say Mr. Brandon had given me a ring, lest there should be some mistake about it; and so I hid it, and it made me uncomfortable and conscious whenever he was mentioned.

I did not like to speak of him as I did of Miss Tott and the children; the consequence was that I thought of him far more than I should have done otherwise, and made a kind of hero of him in my mind, towards whom I felt a certain growing enthusiasm, which affected my imagination, but, so far from making me wish to see him again, kept me keenly anxious to remain at a distance. A sort of

girlish shyness made me think of him as a superior being. My feeling was precisely that which familiarity would have melted away, and if I had even talked about him the halo that surrounded him would have faded. But now, when the sea was rough and I had no book, when it rained and I could not go on deck, when the weather was calm and I sat in the place where I had talked to him, I was obliged to torment myself with troublesome, teasing doubts and fears as to whether he might have fancied, as Tom did, that I had given away my heart to him, or that I had not treated him with enough reserve.

This went on for some time, and we cruised about here and there. My uncle only cared to be afloat, and Tom loved desolate places. He liked to cruise in little lonely creeks, among rocky islets—places where gulls bring up their families, and puffins sit, and penguins live and stare out foolishly at intruders.

I liked this too, when I could land, but that was not often, for my uncle loved to give rocks a wide berth, and I did not like to leave the yacht and go ashore in a boat; but sometimes we used to lie in some snug little harbour, then I was happy.

We sailed up north, and I saw the shoals of herrings come down. Sometimes we got into the midst of one, and I saw them turn up their silvery sides and jostle one another, for they seemed to swim in several layers, and so thickly imbedded that the sea looked a little higher where they were, as if they lifted the water on their backs.

I reared and trained many young sea-birds,—nearly twenty of them followed the yacht, and used to roost in the rigging. They would come down at my call to be fed, and when I would let them they would sit on my knee while I read, or perch on my head and shoulders.

We had a delightful yachting tour all by the beautiful west coast of Ireland. I had always been accustomed to look upon this world as consisting of certain countries bordered by the sea; now I began to think of it as a globe of water. I no longer thought of the shapes of continents, but of the shapes of the seas in which they lay. I could not help this. I began to attach great importance to places that had fine harbours; islands were no good unless there was safe anchorage round them; rivers were delightful because we could sail up them. I soon began to know what rivers could take us on their bosoms, and how far we could go. Sometimes, when I came to a bridge and a town, it appeared surprising to me that so many people could live contentedly on shore; and, after a few days spent in looking about me, I was generally glad to sail again.

Sometimes at the towns on the coast-guard stations old naval officers and young ones came on board, and were made much of. If they were very old friends, my uncle sometimes returned their visits. Tom often did, and not unfrequently one or two would come on board

for a few days ; but we did not have the Mompessons,—one of their children was ill, and they put off their visit indefinitely.

At last, about the middle of September, after loading ourselves with everything we could possibly want, and after many presents from my uncle to me, of ribbons, laces, shawls, gloves, scarves, silks, and other most useless adornments as I then thought them, we set sail for a winter cruise to the West Indies, and after that I was told I should see Rio.

I was greatly delighted, and would fain have flung every scrap of finery into boxes and there left it till I landed ; but Mrs. Brand, as she sat in my cabin at work on the bows of a handsome sash, said to me, rather pointedly, when I entered one afternoon, “ Dear me, ma’am, to think of your putting on that ugly ‘ waterproof.’ ”

“ Ugly is it ? ” I answered ; and I turned my head over my shoulder, for I knew it was short, and that it showed the flounces of my gown beneath it. “ Well,” I continued, “ I can’t always be thinking of my dress.”

“ Can’t you, ma’am ? ” she answered, quietly. “ Well, it’s lucky, then, that in general you don’t object to my thinking of it for you.”

She took off my cloak, for it was wet ; and then, as I made no objection, she tried the sash against my waist.

“ You can’t go on deck again,” she said ; “ and as it only wants an hour to dinner-time, it would be a good thing if you was to let me dress you.”

“ Very well,” I answered, for I was a little struck by her manner ; and I stood quite still while she took out various things, and considered what would look well together, proceeded to put them on.

“ You scarcely ever look at yourself in the glass, ma’am,” she presently said.

“ There is no occasion,” I answered, laughing. “ You take good care that I shall never leave your hands till I am perfectly neat and nice ! ”

“ Most young ladies,” she answered, a little reproachfully, “ look at themselves very frequent ! Master, he was saying, only yesterday, to Mr. Graham, that you were improved to that degree, since you came on board, nobody ever could know you.”

“ Do you think it is so ? ” I inquired, with pleasure.

“ Of course,” she answered ; “ you were so pale then. Not but what I liked the looks of you from the first. I thought,” she continued, looking at me affectionately,—“ I thought you had the innocentest face anybody ever saw.”

“ You mean a baby face, don’t you ? ”

She laughed because I did ; but she returned to the attack.

“ And they’re quite proud of your appearance. Both the gentlemen are. You look so graceful and slender, specially when you’re well dressed.” And so she went on, “ I should take a world of pains, if I were

you, ma'am, to have them always proud of me, and be as particular every day as if there was to be ever so many strangers to dinner. You've got such dozens upon dozens of light kid gloves, why shouldn't you wear 'em in the evening ; you've got such laces, such sashes, and, I don't know what. Dear me, make yourself a charming young lady with it all, or else *after this one cruise, you may depend on it, you won't stay on board long.*"

She spoke with slow impressiveness ; and I was so certain she had good ground for what she said that her words fell on me like a thunder-bolt. I knew my being on board was a great pleasure to her. I knew that many things were said before her and Brand that were never said before me ; and I resolved, there and then, to follow her advice to the utmost. So, when she had dressed me in a lilac silk petticoat, with an embroidered white dress over it, and when she had given me a pair of lilac gloves of a still paler tint, I went up to the glass, thankfully acknowledged a great improvement, and looked at myself with much attention.

" Well, ma'am," she inquired,—" don't look so grave,—will it do ? "

The gown had a light, transparent body, and I took courage ; for I was sure I had never looked so well in my life.

" I think it wants a little gold about it," I replied ; and she brought out a gold necklace that Tom had given me, and a gold bracelet. So I put on my gloves, and she said—

" Now don't be downhearted, ma'am ; but just you give yourself all the airs that ever you can ! "

I turned to kiss her ; but I was rather in dismay, and as I came floating into the chief cabin, with my delicate skirts behind me, I felt myself blush with shyness and discomfort.

But some people are destined to find out things and others to act upon them. To describe the change in my uncle's manner, and Tom's too, would be quite impossible ! And what amused me most, when I could dare to think of it, was that they were perfectly unconscious, both of the change and the cause of it.

No, I never despised my fine array any more. I saw at once how much in their opinion it did for me, and though I caught sight of myself several times that evening in the different glasses, and thought I looked rather too much like a dressed-up flaxen-haired doll, I drew my long dress after me with all gravity, and when my uncle asked me to play on my new piano that he had bought for me, and which I had far too much neglected, I rose, and Tom opening it for me, I forbore to thank him, but took the attention as a matter of course, which I thought would have a good effect, and it had.

I never once again went on deck when it rained, or blew so hard that I could not be well dressed ; and I had frequent consultations with Mrs. Brand as to what I looked best in. It appeared from various little things she said, that I had already been in danger of

being placed with a family on shore, and I found that it was not my dear old uncle who felt that the yacht was an unfit place for me, but this brother whom I so much loved.

I utterly forgot Mr. Brandon in my desire to make myself agreeable and ornamental. Tom was so fond of seeing pretty things about him, and graceful ways, that I could almost always tell whether he liked my dress or not ; and Mrs. Brand was so clever, that there was no need for me to weary him by want of variety.

So I dressed to please my old uncle and my young brother ; I found out, with Mrs. Brand's help, what was becoming ; and, strange to say, my lot has been so cast, that it has been my duty as well as my interest to study the art of dress ever since.

That was a delightful winter ; but Tom has published an account of those travels, and if I were to write of them they would fill volumes. We went gliding about, first among the West Indian Islands,—left our own bare green levels with their low-lying broidery of meadow flowers, and went sliding down over the polished water to the middle of the world ; then, while all the top of it was white, and all its best things were neatly put away, and covered up till spring under the snow, we hung about in little land-locked coves, with polished azure floors, and cliffs as pale as cinnamon, and sometimes stole into the edges of the steaming forests, and saw dangerous wedges from the sun shoot straight in like gold thunderbolts, and the sleepy cayman sweltering in their lukewarm swamps would snap at them, and stretch their yawning jaws as if to take them in.

We fluttered about here and there, from continent to island ; we treated all with great respect ; it did not belong to us who lived on the edge and upper fringes of the earth, and there was danger in the beauty and beauty in the danger.

Then it was that after awhile I began to be sure that the world was yet young ; she was a wild thing that God and His time had only half tamed ; and sometimes by day and always by night, I derived from her ways and the sleep that was on her a consciousness of her life as a whole.

For after sunset, till about midnight, it would often seem that she was slumbering while yet everything on her that had life was restless and stirred, and came out to drink ; and they called and cried to one another and to their Maker (for they are not so unconscious of God as men are,—at least it has long appeared so to me,—but they do not love Him as many of us do), and some of them seemed to cry to Him defiantly, and others grumbled and complained.

Then, about the dead middle of the night, in some parts of the tropical zones, but not in all, there would come a pause, as if the living creatures were appeased and at rest, and thereupon the dark beautiful world would wake up, and while the stars in their courses made it plain to me how fast she was rolling, a sort of murmur would

sound, whether from within and sent up from her mighty heart, or from without and borne by the multitudes of the waves, I cannot tell ; but it is not to be forgotten when once it has been heard, and it seemed like a message sent up into the heaven to remind her Maker, how he had held her in hand very long, and sent her on very fast, and she was not wearied, but altogether amazed, at the greatness of the way. I was so strangely impressed with these sensations, that I often came up in the night, and sometimes Tom—who saw how awful and tender the night-time seemed to me—would call me when there was anything more than usually beautiful to be seen. It was always the same, there was a message, and it was going up to God. Sometimes when I slept after such a midnight watching, I have dreamed that I heard an answer, “It was not long, it was only *a very little while* that she had rolled. It was not far—but *a very little way*.”

While we remained, which we did all the winter in the glorious heat, Tom was sometimes very genial, and generally he was calm ; but as we gradually drew up homeward again, I observed the same silent brooding of thought in his manner that had struck me so much months before. Every day as we came up northward, it fell down over him. He was very dull—almost spiritless. Oh, how different from that Snap whom once I had played with ; he was altered even since I had come on board, more silent and more absent. I could now hardly recognise a trace of what he had been in his early boyhood, and his evident avoidance of all confidential talk, his dislike of being alone with me, and his restlessness, made me often seriously afraid that something—I knew not what—was impending.

I had been greatly struck with his silence and alteration of character when first I left school, but I had made myself believe that he felt shy in my company, on account of our having been parted so long.

Afterwards, when I saw how listless he was, and then, that when we were at Southampton, there was a sort of unnatural eagerness about him, I was compelled to give up that fancy ; the change had nothing to do with me, I could neither influence him nor interest him, I must be content to talk to him and play to him when he wished it. I must take him as I found him.

When we got to Southampton, and sent for our letters to the hotel where they were always directed, I knew—or at least felt—that there would be none for me. I had no correspondents, my father never wrote. Amy only wrote twice a year. So I went forth with Mrs. Brand to take a walk, and I thought I had never seen anything so lovely as the airs the daisies were giving themselves, and the golden clandines, that April morning,—so small and so pleased to show themselves. How different from the great trailing passion-flowers I had come from ! creatures obviously so indifferent who looked at them. The whole of these northern flowers looked so modest, and

yet so conscious of man. I gathered a few daisies, and as I came back to our sitting-room at the hotel, Uncle Rollin tossed me a letter, saying,

"There, Dorothea, you may do as you like, but I shall decline, of course."

It was a letter from Mr. Mortimer, and contained a pressing invitation to him, Tom, and myself to come and stay with him and his family. The country, he said, was looking beautifully, the weather was fine ; his son was impatient to renew his acquaintance with Tom ; his daughters longed to make mine, &c., &c.

"Do you wish to go ?"

I could not tell ; I had been away so long that I felt as if I should be awkward and shy, and I faltered and said that I had never paid a visit in my life, and that this one seemed formidable.

"You will want some new gowns," said Tom, who now entered, and evidently knew the contents of the letter.

The notion of a visit in the country among green hills, fields, and hedges, away from the sound of the sea, and where I might ramble far and wide, was delightful to my yearning heart ; but then, the conversation with Tom, and Mr. Brandon's look when he saw my red eyes, came into my mind, and a kind of sensitive pride and shame kept me silent.

"You cannot hesitate, of course, Dorothea," said Tom, "and I shall go certainly ; I never argued in my life so much as I did with that fellow, and I should like to have it out with him if I could !"

"If she prefers to stay, she may," observed Uncle Rollin.

But no, I did not prefer it ; the yacht was calm, and safe, and quiet, and this visit, I knew, would lift me into a different world. I was very much excited, even at the thought of it, and Mr. Brandon's face and voice, which I had lost from me, and almost for a time forgotten, seemed to come near to me again now that I was approaching his home, and make me feel awkward and shy ; but I longed for the land, so I told Tom I would accept the invitation. During the winter, delightful as I had found its splendid light, colour, and heat, I had often felt an extraordinary pining for the green grass of my own country, and for the cheerful voices of my own country folk. I wanted to use my tongue, my hands, to be busy, even to be teased ; also, to be in a house !

I thought of a landsman's life with romantic interest ; I had visions moreover of Christmas gatherings, things which I had actually never seen, and would often dream that I was digging, or that I was gathering buttercups, or that I was walking to a village church, and could hear the bells ring. Yet I did not like to leave the yacht, because it was my home, nor Uncle Rollin because he and I suited each other so well. I was getting on with my navigation, too, and he

was so fond of me. Yet it made me far more content to go that I was to have Mrs. Brand with me; whatever I might fear as to his leaving me with some motherly woman in a sea-port, I knew he would never leave her behind; she and Brand were necessary to his comfort; so I felt sure that however long we stayed he would wait for us, and set about my preparations for the visit with some security of heart.

As usual he heaped a quantity of finery on me, and showed an unaccountable desire that I should do him credit as far as all my habiliments were concerned. I took several walks with him, during which we inspected the outside of shop windows, and a large assortment of things went with me, which I resolved should never see the light unless I found the family just the very reverse of the sort of people I expected.

I have so many journeys to describe, my life has been so much spent in travelling, that I shall say nothing of this one, but pass on to the moment when Tom and I took leave of Uncle Rollin, and got into a railway carriage in a pouring rain.

We spent four hours in the train. I shall never forget what happy hours they were. I quite forgot Mr. Brandon and all the strangers I was going to, for there were real English cottages to see, and homely farm-yards, with poultry, cattle, trees just breaking into leaf, fallows soaked with spring rain, lambs,—all common things,—but to me they were opening paradise.

The weather grew fine, and then sunny, as we advanced westward. The little station we were bound for appeared at last, the train stopped, and in the balmy delightful air I smelt the perfume of violets.

"There's Brandon," exclaimed Tom, "and a great tall boy, and two ladies."

We were soon out of the carriage; introductions were going on, laughter and welcome. A tall girl was introduced as "my sister, Miss Grant," and another as "my sister Elizabeth," and the youth as "my brother Valentine." This last was a remarkably fine young fellow, with light-brown eyes, a smiling face, and a cracked voice. A country-fied servant was soon dragging out our luggage under Mrs. Brand's superintendence, and while we waited, my eyes in spite of myself were drawn to a bunch of primroses that one of the girls held. I pretended not to care for them, but could not help taking another and another look, whereupon the cracked voice spoke in my behalf.

"Lou, Miss Graham wants your primroses."

The tall boy took them from her without ceremony, and gave them to me. "Would you like some violets?" he continued; "this is a very *violety* place."

"Yes, indeed, I should."

"Ah! I thought so. Lou!"

"Yes."

"Keep up Miss Graham's spirits while I'm gone, by timely allusions to her own demesne ; talk about shell-fish, the grampus, and anything else that's cheerful and salt."

By this time the train had gone on, and Mrs. Brand, looking as if she was going to be led to immediate execution, was sitting still while the luggage was deposited in a cart, by the thin old servant, who wore a suit of drab. I was obliged to leave her to herself ; and Mr. Brandon put me into a large heavy old carriage which was waiting. The two girls followed, and then he said he should wait behind to bring on an old Scotch aunt, who was coming in a few minutes by a train from the west. Tom declared his intention of remaining behind also ; and at the last minute before we started, Valentine came up without his cap, which was full of violets, white and blue, and plenty of wet green leaves.

"Now what do you mean by this imprudence," said his brother, "when your voice is cracked in three places already ?"

As if that was a sufficient answer, Valentine replied that the flowers were for me, and he insisted on getting inside ; and he helped me to make them up into a large bunch, while we drove slowly on through a country lane.

I felt almost too happy to speak, the scent of the flowers was so sweet, and the green hedges, with their half-opened leaves, were so fair.

I looked out and saw daffodils hanging their yellow heads in the warm air ; rooks were sailing and cawing over a group of clms, under which we were passing.

"Romantic, isn't it ?" said Valentine, again coming near to my thought.

After the rain there was a delightful smell of fresh earth. I made some remark about it, and he replied : "We call that clay. Ruts a foot deep. Lou, I say, there are some goslings. I know Miss Graham wants some goslings."

He stopped the carriage and got out. We were passing through a little wood ; I saw wild anemones, and heard birds piping on the boughs ; the delicate sunshine of the north was sifting through them and dropping about on the grass as lightly as if it felt that it was taking a liberty. Down in a hollow, gleaming white in the creases between cushions of moss, I saw wandering patches of snow, for the spring had been late, and warm weather had come on suddenly.

The Miss Grants, now left alone with me, made a few remarks, which I answered mechanically ; while with eyes and ears I took in the delightsomeness of my home.

Presently Valentine returned, with some twigs of willow covered with downy catkins.

"Called goslings by the native children," he observed, as he got in ;

"for this is an inhabited island. Do you see that red erection, with a green door?"

"Yes, certainly."

"That is one of the houses of the native population; places where, as you would say, they 'turn in'; but where, as we say, they 'hang out.' Liz, I know by the look of you that you're going to speak. There's no need."

"Really, Val," exclaimed the sister, "you must not be so impertinent."

"You don't understand the nautical temper. I ought to do. Haven't I got up the names of no end of ropes and spars? Don't I know all about the Gulf Stream? Why, I've studied tonnage and pennons, and stores, that I might meet her in her own element; but now she has run aground I find I'm cut adrift, for her thoughts are set upon dirt and weeds. You like me, don't you, Miss Graham?"

"Very much, indeed."

"Ah, I told you so, Lou. There's another cottage. Now you wouldn't have found out, unless I told you, that I helped to paint that door. When I was young—youngish—I was very fond of paint."

"You were about seven years old," said Liz.

"Yes," replied Valentine. "Our gardener once lived there, and when he went away, St. George got papa to let him whitewash the inside himself, for his own pleasure. I helped, of course; and then he painted it up. And I remember to this day what joy it was to hear the slap of the brush upon the wood! We laid out the garden, too; then we built a pigsty. Papa and mamma used to come down every day to look at us. I helped, as well as I could; and it was very good fun. You see that donkey-shed. St. George built that, too; but I fell off it and broke my arm."

"Is St. George a bricklayer?"

"To think of your not knowing! Why, we call Giles so because mamma did. Now we are coming to a turn in the lane, and you will see our house—my father's house—described in 'The County Guide-Book' as 'the modest but substantial residence of Daniel Mortimer, Esq., Justice of the Peace, with one long wing.'"

"Which has the wing?"

"You will judge of that when you have seen Daniel Mortimer, Esq., and his modest residence; but I thought you had seen my father. Haven't you?"

"Yes; I shall not easily forget him."

"Ah! everyone says I'm my father's own son; and that's more than Giles can say,—or, indeed, others who shall be nameless. Liz and Lou look very prim just now; but you should see them on Sunday morning, quarrelling as to whose turn it is to walk to church with papa. That's a painful spectacle."

Liz and Lou did not seem in the least to resent this speech, but sat back in the carriage, opposite one another, calmly and idly good-humoured. Neither was pretty; but both were rather attractive. They were a good deal alike—being tall, of full figure, hair brown, and falling in natural curls, and faces rather broad.

They had brown eyes, but here the resemblance between them ceased, for Lou had a good set of teeth and a well-formed mouth, and was fair; but Liz had prominent teeth, and what is sometimes called a muddy complexion.

They now pointed out a good-sized square house as their home; it was of red brick, stood in pleasant grounds, and had some fine beech-trees about it.

In five minutes we had stopped at the door, and Mr. Mortimer's white head appeared. He handed me out, and took me into a hall paved with blue and white stone, and hung with fishing-rods and guns.

He took me through it into a small room, where sat a lady, with her feet on the fender, reading a novel. This, I found, was his widowed daughter, Mrs. Henfrey. A tiresome person I then thought her, for she made me sit by the fire, insisting languidly that I must be cold, and mildly positive that I was dreadfully fatigued.

In the meantime the two girls and Valentine, having done their duty by me in bringing me home, declared that they positively must go and meet Aunt Christie; and they set off across the fields, being plainly visible from the window where I sat.

I wished I was with them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ It was a hairy oubit, sae proud he crept alang,
 A feckless hairy oubit, and merrily he sang :
 ‘ My Minnie bids me bide at hame until I get my wings ;
 I’ll show her soon my soul’s aboon the warks o’ creeping things.’ ”

Kingsley.

I WAS left with Mrs. Henfrey for a quarter of an hour, and shot glances now and then through the window at an old-fashioned garden full of gravel walks and formal beds, in which grew patches of red and white and blue hyacinths, and crown imperial lilies, and jonquils, and delightful brown wallflowers and lilac primroses.

After this, Lou and Liz, Tom, Mr. Brandon, and Valentine, all came in together, bearing with them a tall, bony Scotch woman, who was very much bloused, and rather muddy, from having tramped through the woods with them, but she was in as high spirits as any of them, and the noise and cheerful chattering they all made delighted me and made my heart dance. They were very hungry, they said,

and it was long past lunch time, so the old Scotch lady and I were hurried upstairs to divest ourselves of our travelling gear, and then we were taken into a large dining-room with sash windows and heavy red curtains, a wide fireplace, and a somewhat faded Turkey carpet.

Everything was different from my expectations, but nothing was so different as Mr. Brandon ; and I had become so accustomed to my uncle's exceeding shyness, the amount of attendance with which he surrounded himself, and the gilded richness and over-polish and luxury of all the fittings in the yacht, that there was something very delightful to me in the unconscious ease of everybody about me, the absence of servants, and the comfortable old furniture, that looked as if it had been unchanged for years.

"What interests you, Miss Graham ?" asked Valentine.

What most interested me was to find Tom already talking freely to Aunt Christie, who sat by him bolt upright, with a clear sparkle in her pale blue eyes, and a large cap and collar of the very stiffest lace ; but I answered :

"Among other things, the roomy amplitude of this house ; so different from the saloon in the yacht ; and I like these high ceilings and wide doors."

"Oh, I thought you were looking at the pictures. There are Lizzy and Louisa behind you, and there is Giles. Papa had them done : they were in the Royal Academy exhibition last year ; then they went back to the artist, and we have only had them a fortnight."

I cast a glance behind me, saw two shepherdesses in white,—was instantly aware that Lizzy and Lou were flattered, but, luckily, was not asked what I thought.

"And that's St. George opposite."

"You can't think, Graham," said Mr. Brandon, "what a life I am leading just now in consequence of that portrait."

"But is that meant for Mr. Brandon ?" I asked.

"Meant for him !—of course it is," exclaimed Valentine. "Lizzy ! Miss Graham won't believe that is Giles. She thinks it too flattering."

"I did not say anything of the kind. I think it is a very agreeable picture."

"What is the matter with it, then ?" asked Valentine.

"As a likeness, do you mean ?"

"Yes !—take a good look at him, and then see if it is not like."

I did take a good look. I saw not only that this same St. George was unlike the portrait, but he was delightfully unlike the image of his former self, which existed in my mind. He was even a little put out of countenance when I looked at him. I had felt very shy at the notion of seeing that man again ; but this man I felt as much at ease with as if he had been an entire stranger. So after considering him for a moment, and finding that I was expected to reply, I said, "Nothing is the matter ; but that it is not like." And I

hoped they would not ask me whether I thought it flattering—for I did think so—and I felt a sudden sense of joy and freedom, for I had faced the idea which had tormented me, and it had vanished into air.

It was evident that these portraits were just then subjects of frequent family discussion, and that the opinion of a stranger was thought valuable.

"The first thing papa asks you when he comes in," observed Valentine, "will be whether you like that picture; and if you do not like it, he won't like you. He thinks it perfection. I hear him and sister in the hall; they always come in when they think Giles has helped all round. Now you'll see!"

I looked at it again and liked it less; then, while the original talked and laughed and made his dog beg for bones, I noticed him. I had always observed the peculiar grace of his figure, but he was so closely cropped when in the yacht, that he had an air of a convict about him. His hair was now grown; it was dark and stood back from his face with rather a cloud-like effect. His bruises and scorches had disappeared, and his face, though healthful in appearance, had no ruddy tints. His hair had no gloss, that in the portrait shone; but, on the whole, though he was not handsome, there was something striking in his appearance and distinguished about him; and how he had managed to turn himself into such a different person I could not think.

Mr. Mortimer now entered with his daughter, and took his place at the head of the table. Silence was preserved; everybody looked at me. Mr. Brandon, though he pretended to occupy himself with a cold round of beef, was evidently in amused expectation of the question which sure enough was propounded almost directly.

"And what do you think of my pictures, eh, Miss Graham? Good likeness that over the chimney-piece;—uncommonly good; don't you think so?"

Obliged to answer, I replied that I had not noticed much likeness at first, but perhaps it would grow upon me.

He looked surprised; took up his glass to examine it anew. "Couldn't be better,—a wonderful art is portrait painting! Well, now, what fault do you find with it?"

He looked straight at me, and I knew that everyone else was looking too, Tom included. Nothing but the truth and the whole truth would do, so I wished to say it, and, as I hoped, to have done with it.

"I think it is flattered; but perhaps it does no justice to the original?"

"Flattered!" he exclaimed, with evident astonishment, "and does no justice. The two things sound like contradictions. Flattered!"

"Well, papa," said Valentine, "you must admit that those eyes are blue?"

"So are Mr. Brandon's," I remarked; and turning to encounter them, I saw, to his amusement and mine, that they had a decidedly grey hue. "Ah, well," I could not help saying, "I'm sure they used to look blue in the yacht;" but this speech was followed by such a chorus of laughter that I should have felt discomfited if Tom had not joined in it and seemed as much amused as any one. "It must have been the green and yellow bruises that made them look blue," I continued by way of excuse for this want of observation, and then I was urged on by the family to make some further remarks, which Mr. Mortimer caused Valentine to repeat to him.

"She says," exclaimed Valentine, "that Giles has a much more original face than the portrait."

"You are a very original little girl," said Aunt Christie.

"Miss Graham has no wish to be original," said Mr. Brandon, "if you would only let her alone. Never mind, my liege," he continued, raising his voice and speaking to his step-father; "no one is so good a judge of a portrait as the person it was done for, and if you are pleased the thing is good, it could not be better."

But Mr. Mortimer again returned to the charge. "How can a portrait be both flattered and the reverse?"

Then Tom came to the rescue, and said, that could easily be; the gentleman could be made prominent at the expense of the man, the features might be ennobled and yet be made to express a meeker soul.

"Ah,—hem!" said Mr. Mortimer. "Giles, I'll take some more beef. He's the very image of his dear mother; her breathing image!"

"Graham, I wonder what sort of a portrait you would make?" observed Mr. Brandon.

"I'm too sublimely ugly to look well on canvas," said Tom. "I had a photograph done lately for my sister, but the features did not seem to have made up their minds as to their places! The eyes were everywhere. I did not notice the nose, but the mouth seemed to be nowhere."

Aunt Christie looked at him with surprise.

"Graham flatters himself that he's very ugly," said Mr. Brandon; "I don't see it myself; he says real ugliness distinguishes a man."

"Yes," said Tom, addressing Aunt Christie, "ugliness of the right sort is a kind of beauty. It has some of the best qualities of beauty—it attracts observation and fixes the memory. Now you'll find that you won't easily forget me."

He turned full upon her, and she had not a word to say. No doubt she did think him ugly, and she actually looked quite out of countenance, till Valentine, exclaiming that no one had admired the new

carving-knife, Mr. Brandon took it up and displayed its peculiarities ; it was a circular thing, and looked sufficiently formidable.

" It was given to me by a friend of mine who is a poult erer," he remarked.

" Nonsense !" exclaimed Mrs. Henfrey ; " don't believe a word he says, Miss Graham."

" Doesn't he make a good portion of his income by breeding poultry, and doesn't he contract with a man in London to sell it ? Doesn't he send it up by carts full ? I say he is a poult erer, only the oddness of the thing is that he stipulates to be allowed to kill every single bird himself, unless his friends kill them for him."

" Horrid man !" I exclaimed ; " only think of taking delight in wringing the necks of cartloads of poor creatures ! "

" He doesn't wring their necks," said Mrs. Henfrey, " he shoots them. Pheasants, you know ! "

" Oh ! "

" It's only his way of putting things."

" The poor birds were so tame the last time I went out with him that they came running up to us as if to be fed. That's manly sport, you know. I'll never shoot with him again."

" But I mind the day when ye were uncommonly fond of a gun," said Aunt Christie ; " there was the old matchlock your grandfather Brandon gave you, it was almost as long as himself ; and when ye complained to the mannie Murdock how it kicked,—' Kick does she ?' said he, taking the part of the old gun ; ' well, I'd sooner be kicked by her than by a Christian.' "

" So would I," he answered, " some Christians kick very hard. Yes, I was a murderous little wretch. I remember the first rabbit I blew to pieces with it—I almost wept for joy, and grudged going to sleep at night, and losing sight of my own gun."

" What are they talking about ?" asked Mr. Mortimer.

" About St. George's old gun, papa," answered Valentine, who sat on his left hand ; " he gave it to me, you know, when I was a very small boy ; but I was not allowed to load it ; so I used to sit by it, and rub it up here and there with sand-paper, and when I went out I used to lock it up in the attic, and wear the door-key round my neck, lest any one should get it."

" Ay-e," said Aunt Christie, making a sound almost two syllables long of that little word, " how your father smiles ! " He did not hear her, and she went on. " Do ye mind, Giles, yer speech as a child, when I asked you what the new papa was like ? Ye were hopping round the table, and little fat Emily after ye. ' Some people, when they smile,' ye answered, as gravely as possible, ' some people when they smile only stretch out their mouths ; but when the new papa smiles he lights up his shop.' That was because they had taken ye

to London, and ye were so delighted with the shops when the gas was lit."

"If you go into all the family anecdotes that exist in your capacious memory, you must be put to death," he answered; "we can't stand it!"

"No," said Liz. "Now, sister, hasn't she told that anecdote a dozen times at least?"

Sister, who was just rising to leave the room with Mr. Mortimer, made answer, "that no doubt it had been told before."

"And I am sure I know no reason why I am to forget those old days," said the joyous old woman.

"Ah," said Valentine, "those were happy days, Aunt Christie, when *we* were young."

"Speak for yourself, laddie," she answered; "for my part I often feel very inconveniently young yet; I feel a spring of youthful joy in me sometimes which is strangely at variance with circumstances. It would be more to my credit if I could repress it, and I'm going to try."

"No, don't, dear," said Mr. Brandon.

"You're just right, love," said Liz.

"Now, Giles," exclaimed the old lady, menacing him with a spoon, "let me alone, and you too, Miss; you don't consider how you crumple my cap, kissing before company! There's Mr. Graham just scandalised, and no wonder."

"Graham feels rather faint at present," observed Mr. Brandon, "but when I tell him that you belong to us all—"

"Yes, to us all," interrupted Lou; "but not to all equally."

"Their mother was my niece," said Miss Christie; "and Mr. Grant was a far-away cousin besides."

"Cousins don't count," observed Tom, "particularly Scotch cousins."

"So I tell her," said Mr. Brandon.

"Don't they?" exclaimed Miss Christie; "well, there's nothing more interesting to an intelligent mind than relationship, if ye consider it rightly. Why, dear me, I can trace the Brandon voice through fifteen families. Then the Grants all walk as if they'd been drilled. And as to the Mac Queens (my mother was a Mac Queen), I would almost engage to challenge any one of them by the handwriting."

As she appeared to address me, I answered, "Then I hope their characters are as much alike as their writing; for it always seems to me that one can judge so well what people are by how they write."

"Of some qualities one may certainly judge," said Tom; "and of the temper, the amount of energy, and of course the age and sex."

Both the Grants and their aunt declared themselves of a contrary opinion, and we were soon in the midst of a vehement discussion,

every one having a letter or two to produce, folding down middle or ends, that only select sentences might be seen; and being entreated to show more, and declining with pretended confusion.

At first Mr. Brandon took no part in the discussion, but after he had seen us guessing, and being generally wrong, and sometimes oddly right, he said with gravity, "I have some writing here that I think very interesting; I would rather it did not go all round the table, but I should like Miss Graham's opinion on it."

He was standing on the rug under his portrait, and one of his sisters proposed to pass the letter across the table to me, but he declined, and coming round to my chair put into my hand an envelope, out of which he had drawn the letter just so far as to show these words, written in a very small and peculiarly delicate female hand:—

"My very dear Giles, I am pleased to find that you propose to shorten your stay at—" here the sheet was folded down.

"Am I to read all I can see?" I inquired.

"O, yes, but do not open the sheet, for the letter is confidential."

Confidential, indeed, for it ran thus,—"There is nothing that I find so difficult as to do without you, and this feeling increases on me day by day."

That was all, the signature was covered. I wished he had not given me such an affectionate letter to read, especially as he chose to limit the confidence to me.

"What do you think of the writing?" he inquired.

"How very hard that we are not to see it!" exclaimed Valentine.
"Is it a lady's hand, Miss Graham?"

"O yes."

"Ah! do I guess whose? I should rather say so! Does it express counsel, and a large mind, and extreme delicacy?"

"And a love of gardening and music," cried Louisa, evidently thinking, like Valentine, of some special person.

"I don't know about the gardening," I replied.

"Do you think it is a young lady?" asked Mr. Brandon.

"Yes, I should say so, decidedly; but she has not been taught in a modern school, for the letters are round."

"Round!" exclaimed Valentine; "oh, then I give it up."

"I wish you would say what you think," said Mr. Brandon, "for this writing really is deeply interesting to me. Do you think the writing expressive of a hasty temper?"

"No, it flows—I think it means gentleness, and even spirits. This person is seldom in a hurry, and has done this deliberately. The hand looks as if it had not been much used since the writer left school."

Mr. Brandon really looked unutterable things; but I thought it was quite fair that he should suffer for having handed out such a letter.

"Do you think the writer's disposition likely to be affectionate?" he inquired.

"I can form that opinion without any aid from the writing."

"Dear me, this mystery grows very interesting," exclaimed Lou.

"Ah!" said Mr. Brandon, with a sigh that I thought affected, "you mean that you could form that opinion from the words; but the writer's actions leave me no room to doubt that these but feebly reflect the heart."

"Why, he's actually sentimental," cried Liz. "Giles, can this be you?"

"May I express a hope, then, that the affection is reciprocal," I answered; but I thought he should not have made such a letter a matter for discussion: it was evidently a letter from a lady, and not from one of the ladies of the family, for I had seen their writing.

"Reciprocal!" he exclaimed. "There is no one breathing whom I care for half so much! Do you admire my good taste?"

I hesitated.

"You think I had better not have shown it?"

"I think such letters ought not to be shown, unless their writers may be supposed to have no objection. I think this one must have been written in confidence."

"Oh," he answered, holding out his hand for it; "I have others by the same writer which I religiously keep to myself. This is nothing; but they are enough to spoil any man. They have completely spoilt me. Well, Graham, will you come? Here, Lou, suppose you read this aloud."

He tossed the letter lightly on to the table, among his brothers and sisters. It was instantly snatched up; and, while he decamped with Tom, he was followed by cries of "O, you cheat, Giles—you horrid cheat; it's a letter from papa, it's his writing." The rest of the sheet was straightway unfolded and laid before me, and proved to be a loving letter from the old man to the young one, thanking him for having given up, to please him, some intended journeyings. It further related to a certain horse, by name Farmer, who had refused to eat his corn; and to some railway shares, which were to be looked after.

I felt that I had been ignominiously cheated, and wondered that the very circumstance of his showing it to me in the presence of his family had not made me sure it could be nothing of especial interest.

But I had not much time to think. We all left the dining-room, and Liz and Lou took me upstairs to my room, where they began to inspect some of my gowns which Mrs. Brand had left lying on a sofa.

It must be natural to girls to be sociable—at least, it must be natural to me. The delight I felt in talking cosily to Lizzy and Lou is indescribable. We did not say anything very wise, or very much the reverse; but we speedily became confidential. They told

me they had vainly speculated as to what sort of a girl I should prove to be. I confessed how shy I had felt at the notion of coming among so many strangers. These bygone feelings we laughed at, and had just agreed to address each other by our Christian names, when there was a violent knock at the door.

"Who's there?" said Liz.

The cracked voice responded,—

"Ah! I said you were there. What are you doing boxed up with Miss Graham? She's not your visitor a bit more than mine. If you won't come out soon, I shall come in."

"We are coming down almost directly."

"Well, do. It's a shame. Miss Graham?"

"Yes."

"Don't you feel very dull without me?"

"Of course."

Valentine withdrew. We meant to follow, but some fresh topic of discourse was started, and we stayed, perhaps, ten minutes longer.

Another louder knock.

"What do you want, you tiresome boy?" said Lou, now opening the door.

"Why Charlotte, and Dick, and Frank are here; and they have brought the blind pupil."

So down we went, and found these young visitors—two fine youths about eighteen years of age, a very pretty girl, and a blind boy.

I soon found that these were the daughters and pupils of the Vicar. They were all energetic in their lamentations over Valentine's cough; for he, it seemed, when in health, was a pupil at the Vicarage. He was openly assured by the pretty Charlotte that the whole house was in despair at his absence; then one of the pupils administered further comfort by remarking that it never took more than a month to "polish off" the whooping-cough; the other tucked the blind boy under his arm in a really kindly fashion, and they retired, after receiving a present of a little box of eggs from Valentine, which the blind boy touching lightly with his finger-tips, named, and, as it seemed, correctly.

"Old Tikey," Valentine afterwards observed, "was a horrid coddle. Fellows must have the whooping-cough some time, and yet Old Tikey had actually sent him home on account of two boys who had not yet taken it. And isn't that sneak, Prentice, delighted?" he added.

"Who is Prentice?" I asked.

"He's a most odiously conceited fool;—he's an intolerable young prig."

"Come," said Liz; "this is nothing but rank jealousy. Prentice is reading for Cambridge—he is Val's rival, Dorothea."

"He is only just nineteen—five months older than I am—and he is engaged to Charlotte. Only think of that!"

"Silly fellow!"

"Old Tikey doesn't know. Do you think those fellows who called just now look older than I?"

"Older? No, younger. Much shorter, and more boyish altogether."

"Ah! they are small for their years; but the oldest of *those* has made an offer! There never was such a muff in this world; we can make him do anything."

"It's quite true, I assure you," said Lou, seeing me look amazed.

"But I suppose he made it of his own free will?" I inquired.

"Nothing of the sort; we made him do it. It was just after Prentice had informed me of his engagement to Charlotte, and we were all bursting with rage at the airs he gave himself. And so, by a happy inspiration, I said to Grainger—that fellow whom you have just seen—'Well, Dick, I suppose *your* affair will be coming off soon?' And we actually made him believe—that we might make Prentice appear the more ridiculous, you know—we made him believe that he had paid great attention to Old Tikey's sister. She is fat; more than forty; and we made him believe that he had stolen her affections, and must take the consequence."

"If I were you, I would keep these school-boy delinquencies to myself," said Liz.

"Very well, then; talk and amuse Miss Graham yourself."

A silence naturally followed, which I broke after awhile by asking for the end of the anecdote.

"Oh," said Valentine, "two of the other fellows and I talked seriously to him. He is such a jolly muff. We said, 'Grainger, we could not have thought it of you!' And we actually worked him up to such a pitch that he vowed he would do it. But he was very miserable. He said it made him so low to think of a long engagement; and, besides, what would his mother say? We told him he ought to have thought of that before. We made a great deal of his always having carried her prayer-book to church for her. We said, that perhaps he was not aware that this was considered the most pointed attention you could possibly pay to a woman! Well, then we talked of honour, you know."

"What a shame!"

"Yes," replied Valentine, "so it was; but then there was Prentice. We felt that we could not live in the same house with him, unless we could make him feel small. We were strolling under a clump of trees, not far from Old Tikey's house; and when we had worked at Grainger for some time, he suddenly darted off. And an old woman, who lives in a cottage close by, came out and talked to me about my cough, and said if I took three hairs out of a drover's dog's tail, just as he was going to London after the drover, he would carry the cough away with him. 'And those *simple remedies*,' she observed, 'would

often succeed when all the doctors were posed.' Well, we went on talking to her, and wandering about ; then we sat down on a bank, while I did a little coughing. It was the day before I was requested to go home to my disconsolate family. Then we saw Grainger coming. He ran very fast, and looked very jolly. He flung himself down beside us, panting. 'Well,' he cried out, 'I've done it, and she won't have me ; that's one good thing ! But I'll never make an offer again, I can tell you, whatever you may say.' 'Won't have you !' we all cried out, screaming with laughter. 'What, have you gone and done it already ?' And he said he had. He had met her in the shrubbery, and had said, as we told him to say, that he was afraid she was getting thin. She said, 'What, Grainger ?' And so then he continued, 'I said to her what you told me about my hand and heart, and all that ; and she won't have me—said she should not think of such a thing.' Well, we all shook hands with him. I'm a very moral fellow, so I talked to him. I said to him, 'Let this be a warning to you never to trifle with the feelings of the tender sex again.' He said it should."

"This is really true ?" I asked.

"Quite true. When he heard of it, Prentice almost gnashed his teeth. We told it to him as if it was the most commonplace thing in the world that Grainger should have made an offer."

"Isn't this a queer boy ?" said Lou.

"Then Prentice should not be such an ass," he burst out.

"Well, now we are going out for a walk, and Aunt Christie, too. I must go and find her," observed one of the girls.

"I shall accompany you. Some other time I shall tell Miss Graham all about Charlotte, and how she and Prentice correspond. Prentice is such a fool that he even steals other people's jokes, and tells them all wrong. You know that the house of Daniel Mortimer, Esq., has one long wing ?"

"Yes."

"Well, one day when we were making some experiments here, Prentice went up to my room for a bottle of steel filings, and Giles met him wandering about ; so he said, by way of a mild joke, 'Don't you know that, like the albatross, he sleeps on the wing ?' Well, Prentice actually was heard to tell that the next day thus, 'My friend Mortimer, I dare say you know that, like the albatross, he—he flies all night !' He had forgotten the point of it ; but he came here to lunch with Charlotte soon after, and told St. George how Old Tikey had bought some Irish pigs that would not stop in the sty. One ran away, and jumped clean through a cottage window. Mr. Tikey, in full chase, bolted in at the door and found the woman of the house boiling a dozen, at least, of pheasant's eggs. 'Boiling pheasant's eggs !' said Giles ; 'foolish woman. Why, they were poached already ! If I had such a pig as that,' he went on, 'I would soon cure him.'

Would you believe it ! Prentice looked earnestly at him, and answered, 'How ?'

If Prentice had not been one of the chief arbiters of my fate—I may say *the* chief arbiter—I would not have recorded all this nonsense of Valentine's. As it was, let me say, with due solemnity, that this was the first time Prentice rose on my horizon like a star.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Who would dote on thing so common,
As mere outward handsome woman?"—*Wither.*

We set off for a walk, and I smelt the fresh earth and the spring flowers. "Oh, do let me garden a little ?" I exclaimed, as we came to a border, by which lay some gardening tools.

"To be sure, there is a rake and a trowel," said Aunt Christie ; "rake away, my dear."

"No ; I must have the spade, it is so delightful to set one's foot on it, and feel the earth coming up."

"Ah !" exclaimed Valentine, "and so you shall. 'Let spades be trumps,' she said, and trumps they were." (Pope.)"

"Oh Val, how mean of you to begin in this way, when you know you promised," said Liz, sullenly.

"I said I would be sparing, just at first," retorted Valentine ; "but, now, Miss Graham, don't you think it is very mean of my family to repress my rising genius ? many would be proud of it."

"What have they done ?"

"Done !—I say, Lou, how long is this to go on ? She has dug up a lily bulb."

"I will set it again ; now I have dug enough."

"Then we can proceed. Why, this is what they have done : my vein lies in apt quotations, and they won't let me exercise it."

"We didn't like it every day, and all day long," said Liz. "Now, I'll just lay the case before you, Dorothea : Emily knew that when she went away we should be terribly oppressed, and so she made a rule——"

"That the moment I began, if they could call out the author's name, and say, 'Pax,' I was instantly to stop, if it was only at the second word ; but, if they could not, I might go on to the end ; and, then, if I could not give his name, I might be pinched, or pricked, or otherwise tormented." He said this with an indescribable air of boyish simplicity.

Aunt Christie remarked that the rule sounded fair.

"Yes," he exclaimed ; "but they never can call out 'Pax,' for they

are not at all well read, so the rule comes to nothing, unless St. George is present, and he is so quick, that I can hardly ever get out a word; in fact, he often calls out what I am *going* to say, and stops it; then, of course, I'm stumped. Now, what are you laughing at, Miss Graham?"

"Because 'you are so extremely young, sir' (Dickens)."

"I'm almost as old as you are," he replied.

Was there ever such an opportunity given for a retort; the old aunt, with her fine Doric accent, instantly exclaimed, "I grant thee, for we are women when boys are but boys."

He danced round her, shouting out various names, but not the right one; and she went on till she had drawled out her quotation:— "Now, don't move your arms and legs about so, laddie; it's quite true, as Miss Graham will tell you, and ye should not have begun it."

"Yes," I went on, "'We grow upon the sunny side of the wall' (Taylor)."

"Ah," said Valentine, calming down, after his exercises, "I'm not up in that old fellow. Who would have thought it? 'Thou art a caitiff and a lying knave, and thou hast stolen my dagger and my sword,' those are almost the only lines of his that I know; but they're sweetly appropriate."

"Well, now we shall have a little peace, I hope," said Liz, "as he is conquered with his own weapons."

"Are you conquered?" I inquired. "I think you are only sighing to yourself, 'Ah me, what perils do environ the boy that meddles with cold iron.'"

"Boy, indeed!" he exclaimed; "but, Pax, (*Hudibras*), this is nothing but envy of my superior parts. I will lead you and Aunt Christie such a life. Even if you quench me, you will only be disappointed, as the wild Tartar is who, when he spies a man that's handsome, valiant, wise, if he can kill him, thinks to inherit his wit, his wisdom, and his spirit; or, as that famous schoolman was, who swallowed his enemy's knife, that it might be handy to whet his words, and sharpen his tongue on."

"How was he disappointed?"

"He found it cut short all his arguments."

"And the Tartar?"

"Why, he was doubly disappointed, for when he had killed the other Tartar, there was nobody left to fight with, which was very dull; and he himself was as ugly and cowardly as ever."

"And that's a fine compliment, by implication, to us," said the old aunt.

"Yes," said Valentine, "and one chief merit of this quoting faculty is, that by means of it, one can tell people such home truths."

"Well," said Aunt Christie, "but it's a very elaborate kind of wit, and I think I agree with Lizzy, that it's not worth exercising."

"The fact is," said Valentine, "I am not doing myself justice. I feel so coy to-day; you really must bring me forward. Wait a minute."

He darted off to a little copse, and thrust his head into a bush.

"The Oubit grows," said Aunt Christie; "he's a stately young fellow."

"I said so," exclaimed Valentine, coming up; "those precious little lesser-white-throats are building there again."

"But you won't be so mean as to steal the eggs," said Liz; "I am sure you have eggs enough."

"Nay, nay," said Aunt Christie, unexpectedly taking Valentine's part, "ye must not look for virtues that are contrary to all nature. I should as soon expect to meet with a ghost that could crack a nut, as a boy that could keep his hands off a nest of young linties."

"That's the second time I have been called a boy during the last five minutes."

"Didn't ye invite me, yourself, into your room last Christmas," exclaimed Annt Christie, "and wasn't it just choked with rubbish of every sort that boys delight in?"

"He has such a value for some of his rare eggs," says Lou, "that he takes them about with him, packed in bran, wherever he goes."

"Well," answered Valentine, "I don't see that they are a bit worse rubbish than many things that other people carry about."

"Not a bit, Oubit, not a bit; the amount of rubbish that some people are proud to carry is just amazing. It is a blessed thing, indeed, that none of us can take our rubbish to another world; for, if we could (I speak it reverently) some of the 'many mansions' would be little better than lumber-rooms."

"Why do you call him 'Oubit'?" I inquired.

"Mamma did," was the reply.

"But what is an Oubit?"

"Nobody knows. St. George thinks it's a hairy caterpillar; but I say it must be a kind of newt."

By this time we had reached a little wood, as full as it would hold of anemones, celandine, and wild daffodil. We gathered quantities of them, and I felt the joy of roving about where I would. This is a kind of bliss that no one can imagine who has not been some time held captive at sea. It kept me under its influence till we had returned to the house, and I had dressed for dinner. Some neighbours had been invited to meet us. I told Liz and Lou that I had never been present at a dinner-party in my life. They said this was not a real dinner-party, it was only having a few friends to dinner, and that among them would be only one interesting

person. This was a nephew of Mr. Mortimer's, a banker in a neighbouring town, who lived a little way out of it, and had been invited to meet Tom because he was such a clever man, and because they wanted to show him that they had clever friends themselves sometimes.

None of the guests had made their appearance when I came into the drawing-room. Mrs. Henfrey and Valentine were down there. I was asked how I had liked my walk; and when I had answered, Mrs. Henfrey said, "And which way did Giles take Mr. Graham?"

"As if you could not guess, sister," exclaimed Valentine.

The sister smiled, and I looked out at a window, and saw a wide stretch of beautiful country, for the drawing-room was upstairs; and I thought Tom must have been pleased, whichever way he had walked.

"Of course," continued Valentine, "he went down the Wigfield Road, that he might gaze on those chimneys and the endeared outline of that stable."

"I thought she wasn't at home," said Mrs. Henfrey.

"Mind," observed Valentine, "I don't know that he went that way, I only feel sure of it. You ask him."

"Oh, you feel sure, do you? I thought Miss Dorinda was not come home."

"No more she is; but has the place where she hangs out no charms for a constant mind?"

"You are rude—hangs out, indeed! I wonder what Miss Graham thinks of you! Ah! here is Giles! Well, which way did you walk?"

"Down the Wigfield Road," replied Mr. Brandon.

"What attractions must a whole wig possess," said Valentine, aside, to me, "'when beauty draws us with a single hair.' (Pope.)"

"Is she handsome?" I asked, also aside.

"She is."

Strange to say this revelation as to the state of Giles's heart was a considerable relief to me. I am quite sure I was glad. I had always known, past the possibility of a doubt, that he felt no attraction towards me; but I felt a kind of enthusiasm still about him, because he was philanthropical, and I thought he had high motives, so I cared for him. In a certain sense he was dear to me, and I did not wish to lose him—out of my world—married or single; but I had been teased about him, and, consequently, I had felt as if all the natural instinct of friendship towards him must be smothered; now I knew that he had attractions elsewhere, and I felt calm security and ease flow into my heart at the thought of it. "Now," I thought, "this annoyance really is over." I have frequently thought so; and yet it kept cropping up again.

So I thought, as the visitors arrived. Talk flowed around me,

and I joined now and then in it ; but soon sank again into a reverie, from which I only roused myself when I saw Mr. Brandon standing before me, offering his arm, and slightly smiling at the sight of my deep abstraction.

Valentine followed with Lou. "I say, Miss Graham !" he exclaimed, as we began to descend.

"Yes."

"I 'm so hungry—there 's an unutterable want and void—a gulf, a craving, and a sinking in, as when——"

"O stop ! at least, I mean, Pax (Taylor), what you have been about since you came home is very obvious."

Mr. Brandon glanced at me with amused surprise.

"Obvious," replied Valentine ; "of course it is. I would be loth to cast away my speech ; for besides that it is excellently——"

Here he was stopped by the "Pax."

"Now that is what I complain of," said his brother, "if you will quote, what you say should not only be applicable, but droll in the application."

"You 're always stamping on me," said Valentine.

Both he and Liz had a delightful little way of being sulky for an instant, and then forgetting it again. So, as he came out of that sulks and sat down beside me, I murmured to him, "'O Knight, thou lackst a cup of canary ; when did I see thee so put down !'" but I felt on the whole that quoting was a tiresome trick, and I would not help him with it any more.

We passed rather a dull evening : the guests were familiar with the household without being intimate ; every one present seemed used to every one else. But, as the evening advanced, I again had the pleasure of seeing Tom get into a most vehement argument. He and Mr. Brandon were on one side, and Mr. John Mortimer on the other. The gold coinage of England, it appears, is pure, but the silver they called not real money, but tokens. I hardly understood enough to know which side triumphed, or why it mattered. But it was delightful to see Tom so full of fire.

When all the guests were gone, Valentine withdrew, and as we still sat talking, he came in again with a hat in his hand, and, walking up to his brother, held it out to him, just as a beggar sometimes does in the street.

St. George, pretending to misunderstand him, leaned over it as he sat, and looked down into the crown with an air of great interest. "Well !" he said.

"A poor boy out of work, sir !" said Valentine ; "no friends to speak of ; earned nothing all the winter ; silver coinage of this wretched country so debased that it's against my principles to spend it. Nothing but gold can do me any good, sir."

"I never give gold to beggars."

"Well, hand out your purse, then, will you?" said Valentine, "and I'll promise only to take *one*."

St. George actually did so.

"But you had much better say two," continued Valentine; "they would last much longer."

"No, I won't," answered Giles, laughing; "they would not last a day longer."

Valentine thereupon returned the purse, and, with the sovereign in his hand, marched straight across the room to his father. "Papa," he exclaimed, in a loud, plaintive voice, as of one deeply injured, "will you speak to Giles?"

"Will I what?" exclaimed his father, who had been amusing himself by watching the transaction.

"Will you speak to Giles?" repeated Valentine, in the same loud, plaintive tone. "If this sort of thing is allowed to go on, and I can get money from him whenever I like, it will perfectly ruin the independence of my character." (He showed the sovereign in his palm.) "Giles has no strength of mind whatever," he continued, shaking his head in a threatening manner. "You'd much better increase my allowance; for, if not, I'm very much afraid this system will continue."

"Go to bed, sir! go to bed!" exclaimed his father. "You are an impudent young dog, if ever there was one; and you know very well that you are not to sit up late while you have this cough upon you."

Valentine retired with great docility; and the next morning when I woke I saw Mrs. Brand holding a great bunch of primroses and violets. She said she had picked them up on the mat outside my door. A little twisted note was stuck into the midst of them. I opened it, and it ran thus:—

"When I awoke, I said to myself, 'Ale, Squeerey?' (Dickens) meaning primroses. The same agreeable party answered, with promptitude, 'Certainly, a glassful' (ditto). You should have had more, only I have been studying you can guess what.—His own, V. M."

In due time I came down, and, as I entered, heard Mr. Mortimer saying, "Well, if he is not likely to be in time, we must have prayers without him."

He was evidently Mr. Brandon: every one else was present.

So we had prayers; the venerable white head looking more reverend than ever as it bent over the book.

We then proceeded to the dining-room to breakfast, and Mrs. Henfrey said, "I don't quite understand this matter yet."

"Why, sister," said Valentine, "it is simple enough. Giles was out, and saw this boy stuck in the boggy ditch; upon which, throwing himself into an attitude, he very naturally exclaimed, 'Though

thou art of a different Church, I will not leave thee in the lurch."

"I'll venture to say he said nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Henfrey, very tartly. "It was the milk-boy, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, his parents are not Dissenters. Stuff and nonsense! They only go to meeting now and then."

"But he must have said something," argued Valentine. "He may have changed the word 'church' to 'parish,' and added, 'I will not leave thee in the marsh.'"

"It's extraordinary, I am sure," said Mrs. Henfrey, with a slight groan, "how the poets came to write so many lines as if on purpose for him."

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Mortimer, "now suppose you give us a sensible account of the matter, without any more of this foolery."

"I don't know any more, papa, excepting that I met Giles marching home, covered with mud and clay up to his waistcoat pockets."

Just then the old thin footman came in, and was asked what he knew of the matter. His reply, given with a toast-rack in his hand, ran thus:—

"Yes, sir, Mr. Brandon, sir, was going along just where the ditch is so wide and boggy, and he heard a boy a hollering and a hollering, and he found the milk-boy was stuck in the clay. He had tried to jump the ditch, instead of going round by the plank. That was how it came to pass; and the more he worked his legs about, the deeper he got, till the ditch was full of puddles of milk. And so, sir, Mr. Giles dragged the boy out, and he had just got him on the bank when I came up, for I had heard the hollering as I went nigh, with the rolls. Says Mr. Giles to me, 'Just scrape the poor child, Sam; here's sixpence to pay for his milk. And let this be a lesson to you, youngster,' he says, 'never to jump over a bog when there is a plank near at hand.' So, then, sir"—(here the footman uttered a laugh of sudden delight)—"So, then, sir, Mr. Giles went back a few paces, and gave a little run to jump over in the very same place, but the bank, being soft and rotten, broke with him, and he slipped down backwards, and—"

"And tumbled in himself!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, in high delight—"Ha! ha! Well, such things will happen now and then."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Brandon tumbled in backwards, and sat himself down in the very thickest of the bog, and splashed himself all over with milk and mud." Here, the old man, unable to restrain his mirth, retreated hastily, and Mr. Brandon came in.

"Well, Giles, my boy," said his stepfather, after the customary morning greeting, "how did you get out of that bog? Sam has told us all the rest."

"Did he tell you how, in my adversity, he and that little ungrate-

ful wretch stood on the bank perfectly convulsed with laughter, and how I was so excessively surprised when I found myself sitting in the bottom of the ditch, that I did not stir for a full half-minute, but sat staring at them with appealing mildness ?"

They all laughed but Mrs. Henfrey ; and she, not in the least amused, inquired how he got out, after all.

" Oh, I floundered up, and Sam held his stick. That part of the business was soon managed."

" Let this be a lesson to you, youngster," said Valentine, with a kind of respectful gravity, " never to jump over a bog when there is a plank near at hand" (Brandon). He took care to speak loud enough for his father to hear, and in the plaintive voice that he generally affected when making a joke.

" Come, come, sir," said the old man, secretly enjoying it, " let me have no more of this. Giles is a great deal older than you are, sir."

The elder brother said nothing, but he looked at Valentine with a significant smile, and proceeded to help himself to the viands, and talk with Tom over their last night's argument with John Mortimer. The English sovereign, it appears, is worth much the same all the world over, but the English shilling is alloyed, and this, it seems, is not done with any deliberate intention of cheating the English people, but from motives of policy. Now, Tom and Mr. Brandon had sagely remarked that so long as anybody would give a sovereign for twenty shillings, it mattered nothing to the people that they were not really worth it ; but Mr. John Mortimer had maintained that it did matter ; it mattered very much to everybody, but especially to the poor.

Tom declared his intention of going into the subject, but this was not merely because Mr. John Mortimer had differed from them, but because he had talked of the whole of that wonderful invention called money as if a great part of the prosperity of nations depended on what their money was made of, and how much they were charged for the making of it. Moreover, in an evil hour for himself, he had declared that these things were so simple that he wondered how there could be any difference of opinion about them.

This discussion being not of much interest to any of us but to me, and that only because it had roused Tom, we all retired to the little morning room except Tom and Mr. Brandon, who had not finished his breakfast, and here Valentine brought a volume of " Telemachus " to his sister Lou, and, sitting down by her, began to read aloud, with much mousing and a particularly bad accent.

" You see, Miss Graham," said Mrs. Henfrey, casting a reproachful glance at him, " this young gentleman makes no stranger of you."

I said, truly enough, that I was glad of it ; and she was quite right. We might have been staying there a year for any difference we made in any of their arrangements or any of their gentle, easy household ways.

Valentine remarked that Giles had threatened not to take him to France that year unless he would improve his French, and he stumbled through a page or two, being continually corrected by Lou.

"It's perfectly abominable," she exclaimed, "you will pronounce every *e* impartially, and how often do I tell you not to divide the words."

Valentine groaned—"What with your being so particular, and this fellow being such a shocking muff, it is too much for my spirits. Now then—'Mais dans votre bonheur souvenez vous du malheureux Narbal et ne cessez jamais de m'aimer. Quand il eut achevé ces paroles je l'arrosai de mes larmes (ugh!): de profonds soupirs m'empêchaient de parler (hang this fellow, he's always blubbering!) et nous nous embrassions en silence.' Miss Graham, did you ever read 'Telemachus' through?"

"Yes."

"Does he find his papa?"

"I shall not tell you; that might rob the story of its thrilling interest."

"Well, I can't stand much more of this sobbing and crying. Homer himself is bad enough, and Pope makes him worse. They 'cry quarts':—

"Tears his cheeks bedewed,
Nor less the father poured a social flood,
They wept abundant and they wept aloud."

Tom and Mr. Brandon now came in.

"Ah!" said Aunt Christie, partly addressing them, "and these are the classics, ye see—these are what ye spend your young lives, all of you, in getting a smattering of."

"But it must be done," answered Valentine, "and as this fellow waters all the strangers with his tears, I really am afraid he will pour out such a flood if he meets his father, that the consequences to that old buffer will be serious."

"A mere smattering," repeated Aunt Christie, nodding at them; "and so, as they can't bear to feel that all their time has been wasted, they pretend afterwards to think highly of the classics; *though they know better*. Why, what's in this Homer that they make such a work about? What's Achilles but a sort of glorified navvy? He kills his meat as well as his man. Priam runs away at first (that I never could get over), and what's it all for? Why, two women, neither of whom is any better than she should be."

"You shall write another Shorter Catechism," said Mr. Brandon, "and we shall all be bound to learn it."

"First question," said Tom, blandly: "*Where is Scotland situated?* Answer: *At the top of England*."

"Ay, indeed, and ye are very right," said the old aunt, laughing.

"Second question," added Mr. Brandon : "What is a school? Answer : *A place where they teach boys to be pagans every day, and tell them to be Christians once a week.*"

He then walked up to the window, and saying what a beautiful morning it was, asked if we should like to have it open, and was just opening it, when I, having nothing to do, ran up-stairs for my workbox. In less than three minutes I came down again, and outside the door, which was shut, stood Valentine panting on the mat.

"It's locked," he said ; "the door's locked, and you can't get in."

"Locked?"

"Yes ; that villain Giles,—how he comes to be so strong I can't think ;—I was as quiet as possible, reading away at my French, and he came behind me, and in the twinkling of an eye, before I could speak, he folded me up, and I was outside the window sitting among the tulips and things. Look at my coat. I'm all covered with tulip-dust."

"Dear me, I wish I had seen it. Did he send you flying out, or only lay you down like a parcel?"

"O, how base some people are ! Giles, Giles, sir" (he called through the keyhole), "you've locked out Miss Graham."

"No, stop," I said, "as we are locked out, suppose we steal a march on them, and go for a walk this lovely morning?"

"You won't do it?"

"I will, if you will."

He expressed his delight in some strange fashion. I ran up-stairs, was soon equipped, and off we set, on one of the sweetest spring mornings that ever smiled itself away.

The shadows of dark-green leaves are sweet and solemn, but the shadows of pink and white blossom are the rarest and most delicate in all nature. We heard all about us the piping of blackbirds, and the near humming of contented bees. We got into the orchard and down to a little stream that bordered it, and when I saw the glittering water-buttercups, the mosses, and all the trees so ghostly fair, I felt what an ecstasy there is in youth and spring.

Then we got under a great pear-tree, smelt its blossom, and looked up through it to the pale blue sky, and I was so oppressed with happiness, that I could hardly speak, and for a long time could not leave the enchanted spot ; the common world I felt would seem so plain and chill after it.

But we did leave it, and I found the fir-wood beyond almost as beautiful ; it abounded with the nests of thrushes and linnets, and round its edges we gathered violets ; then we came back to the orchard, sat down on a bench, and my heart kept repeating, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" Then suddenly Valentine said—

"Do you think people are better or worse than they appear?"

"Do you mean people in general, or ourselves?"

"O well, I suppose I meant you and me."

"I think just now we must be better than we appear,—we must have some better thoughts than any words we have said."

"But this is such a wonderful morning,—so lovely that it makes one feel quite solemn."

"Yes, and everything so happy and so good."

"Ah, well, I wish I did not live with such extremely good people—such people I mean as my father, and Giles, and Miss Dorinda. When you see how they go on you will wish the same, unless you are a very excellent person yourself, and I don't see that you are."

"Oh, but I always thought it helped one on to be with such people."

"No, it doesn't. They have found out all sorts of ways, both of doing good and being good ; they go into motives, and they think they must govern their bad feelings. Well, I should never have found out such things if I had been let alone, therefore it would not have been my duty to practise them. Now they stare me in the face, and I often feel miserable for fear I ought to be different."

"Oh, you are quite a child in spite of your height," was my thought ; "you have no reserve, even with a stranger." But I answered,— "Surely that is better than not thinking about it."

"It is very disagreeable," he replied, "to feel that one gets worse as one gets older."

"Disagreeable," I replied ; "how can you use a word so inadequate to express the feeling ?"

"Well, you know what I mean."

"Yes ; but when we feel that, we know that we can have help to become better if we will ask for it."

"Ah, yes," he answered, naively ; "but then, you know, you would have to ask for it quite sincerely, and without any reservation. Do you think I look as if I was going to be a clergyman ?"

"Not in the least, as far as I can judge."

"But I am ; at least if I can make up my mind to it. Mamma always wished it so much, and so does my father."

"I do not see that your being so fond of fun is at all against it."

"No—so Giles says—and some fellows must be clergymen, you know. I've got to decide during the next few months, and if I really feel I ought not, Giles says he shall back me. Isn't it odd, my talking in this way to you ?"

"Very odd ; I was just thinking so."

"I never do, excepting to him, and not to him if I can help it, because he takes advantage of me afterwards ; when I don't work he reminds me of things we have talked about. I have no business to be out here now with you. I ought to be doing my Greek."

"Bring it here then, and we will do it together."

"Ah! I want to hear you read Greek; but will you promise to wait for me?"

I promised, and while he was gone sat under the pear-tree delighted with life and spring.

Tramp, tramp, came a slow foot. I wished Valentine had not been so expeditious; but I did not look round. Something was being read or said aloud, and I soon observed that it was by a far different voice from the cracked one I had been listening to that morning.

The steady foot came on; there was a narrow path before the bench, and I saw Mr. Brandon advancing, looking grave and abstracted. He was conning or reading a speech from some written notes in his hand, and was perfectly unconscious of my presence as I sat buried among the bending pear-boughs.

I heard a sentence as he advanced. He did not look up, and would have passed but that he had to push aside a branch, in doing which he glanced off his notes, and beheld me within a yard of his face.

He started up again with no little surprise, and sent the bough swinging in his haste, so that it scattered me and the grass with a shower of little flower pearls.

"Miss Graham! who would have thought it?—and all alone."

"All alone: that is no misfortune. I am very happy."

"Yes," he answered, "I see you are. Set in a white world of blossom, and lost in maiden meditation; but why did you come here?"

"Because I was locked out of the morning room."

"A sufficient cause, and one that ought to make me ashamed of myself, but does not; for, if I may judge by appearances, you are very much indebted to me."

"Yes, it is so long since I set my feet on the soft delightful sward, that I wish I might stay here all day."

"You were led here by instinct?"

"No, by Valentine; and he is now gone to fetch his Greek books, to do some construing with me."

"What a delightful *camaraderie* seems to be established already between you two!"

"Birds of a feather, you know."

"You are joking; you cannot really feel any similarity and equality."

Being touched here on a weak point, I replied that I felt myself to be a grown-up woman while he was only a boy. "But he is a very delightful boy," I went on, "for he likes me, and likes to be with me."

"In my eyes he is a charming young fellow, a joyous, idle, frank,

unreasonable young dog ; but is every one, even a boy, charming in your eyes if he likes you, and likes to be with you ?"

" I don't know. I should think not. But this sudden friendliness I have not met with hitherto ; it has the charm of novelty."

" That charm," he said, quietly, " will most likely soon wear off."

He stood before me pressing the moss with his foot, and with the faint shadows of the blossom flickering on his face. I think he was a little impatient to go on, but he could not very well leave me by myself any more than I could him. I liked just as well to be alone.

" What a time that boy is !" he presently said, looking along the path, and lo ! the expression of his face changed suddenly to one of considerable embarrassment, his open forehead flushed slightly, and he made a hasty movement as if he would have retreated, but checked himself.

At the same instant I heard several voices, Mr. Mortimer's among them, and presently the fine white head emerged from the entanglement of blossoming boughs ; then Liz and Louisa appeared, and lastly Valentine.

Giles stood his ground.

" Bless me," exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, " how pleasant it is out here ! I thought you were getting up your lecture, Giles," and thereupon he sat down by me and cleared his throat loudly, and I thought significantly.

" So I was," answered the step-son, " and, coming accidentally down here, I found Miss Graham sitting all alone."

At that ill-advised, but most true word, " accidentally," both the sisters and Mr. Mortimer openly smiled. I was not at all put out of countenance, " the endeared outlines of those chimneys " were present to my thoughts, if not to theirs.

" Well," said Valentine, excusing himself for having left me, " I am sure I have not been gone a quarter of an hour, and I should have been here before, only that I could not find my lexicon."

" We must try to forgive you, my boy," said Mr. Mortimer, with a twinkle in his eye, " and so must Giles. A quarter of an hour is not long, after all, for him to be kept from his lecture."

Here taking up the defence of the oppressed, I made a remark as to how I had been locked out, and this gradually drew on the whole story.

" Locked him out !" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, with a puzzled air.

" Yes, papa," said Lou, " Giles put the Oubit out of the window, for making game of him at breakfast-time, and then locked the door to prevent his getting in again."

" And I brought Miss Graham here," said Valentine ; " and we were so happy."

" But when we unlocked the door," observed Liz, " we found it bolted on the outside."

"Naturally you did," said Valentine.

"And we did not like to ring," she continued; "we thought it would look so odd to the servant to find us bolted in, so we waited, hoping Dorothea would come to the outside."

"Where is young Graham?" asked Mr. Mortimer.

"He is in my room," said St. George, "hunting up something about the currency. We are going to dine with John Mortimer to-morrow, before the lecture."

"Oh, he will go with you to the lecture, will he?" said Louisa.

"Yes; are you going?"

"We shall if Dorothea would like to go."

"There are to be some stunning illustrations, I can tell you," said Valentine, and Mr. Brandon withdrew.

"You'll see it reported in one of the county papers next Thursday," remarked Valentine. "St. George will figure as our talented What's-his-name. 'We have to report another successful effort from the son of that spirited magistrate and consistent *Pink*, who, living not a hundred miles from Wigfield, in patriarchal comfort,' &c. Then at the end you will read how St. George held his audience enthralled, and surpassed himself in lively eloquence and appropriate illustration: 'We are happy to find that Mr. Brandon has entirely recovered after his late battle with the turbulent waves of the Atlantic, and that his adherence to the *Pink* cause in this borough is as staunch as ever.'

"Sir, you are impertinent," said his father, who had taken care not to speak till he had finished all he had to say.

"Yes, father," replied Valentine, humbly, "I am sorry to say that is too often the case," and he shook his head and sighed.

Mr. Mortimer looked at me with an air of amusement, that seemed to say, Isn't he a funny young fellow? and continued—"Giles, sir, is an honour to us all; I wonder you are not proud of your elder brother."

"I am," answered Valentine; "I think it must be my being puffed up with pride about my relations that makes me so insufferable."

Mr. Mortimer now declared himself rested, and his two step-daughters bore him off, leaving Valentine and me to our task.

So we began to read, and I soon found myself in the position of instructress; his talent evidently was not for languages, and as a pupil I found him absolutely provoking; he would not attend to his book; he stopped so often to talk—to compliment,—and in his horribly cracked voice to sing little snatches of songs, that at last we got into a decided dispute, for he was perfectly careless and indifferent, and I was very much in earnest. "Oh, come!" I exclaimed, as with a ridiculously broken voice he sang, "If she be not kind to me, what care I how fair she be!" "if you do not give your mind to what you are about, you will never come to any good."

He stared at me with surprise.

I was fluttering the leaves of his lexicon, vainly investigating a point that he chose to consider settled, and the more I searched the more he sang, till at last, thoroughly roused, and rather indignant, I gave him a good scolding, and asked him what he could be thinking of to trifle away his time in that way?

He turned his clear eyes upon me, ceased to sing, and gradually arrived at the conclusion that I really was giving him a lecture, that I meant what I said, and that I really did regard the reading, not as play, but as work. So he withdrew his idle hand from his waistcoat pocket, took the book gravely from me, and went on construing for full ten minutes with exemplary care and a kind of urgency and energy that surprised me.

At the end of that time I heard footsteps, and saw a little smile begin to tremble over the lips of my companion, but he did not pause till his brother came up and stopped before us; then he clapped to the book, and exclaimed with a burst of laughter, "She says I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"So you ought!" I answered, audaciously, but obliged to laugh too.

"She says I am not in earnest about anything, and that I shall certainly go to the dogs if I don't mend my ways."

"I uttered no such words, but I said what implied as much; and so I think."

When I saw Mr. Brandon's amused face, I felt suddenly ashamed of the warmth I had displayed, and the unguarded things I had said to my two days' acquaintance.

He put aside the pear boughs, came close, and sat down on a tree-stump at our feet, folding his arms and looking up at us.

"It appears that you and Miss Graham have been quarrelling?" he remarked.

"Not at all!" I replied; "but I was reading with your brother, and he would not give his attention to what he was about, so—" I hesitated.

"So you scolded him?"

"Yes," said Valentine, "she was in such a passion. She is quite flushed now, as you can see."

St. George glanced at my face.

"Well, Oubit," he said, "I hope you appreciate the compliment."

"Compliment! do you think I like to be scolded?"

"Don't you like that a lady should take enough interest in you to be vexed when you behave like a child?"

"The compliment was of my paying," said Valentine, with an easy smile; "I was naturally occupied with her and not with the lexicon, and she got quite indignant—roused—her eyes flashed, and she said such things! I declare she made my cheeks tingle. Miss Graham?"

"Yes."

"I declare I thought for a moment you were going to cry."

Oh ! what an accusation of childishness, and I had meant to be so old in all my ways ! I looked up, and Mr. Brandon met my eyes with a sweet and tender smile, such as one bestows sometimes on a dear child, and I thought how hard it was that I could neither look like a grown-up woman nor behave like one.

"I have often told you," he said to his brother, "that your want of earnestness is ruinous—deplorable ! Now you have come in contact with an earnest nature which cannot endure trifling where grave interests are concerned, see how you have shocked it !"

"Well, I shall work harder next time," said Valentine, with easy good-nature, "but it's not my way to be excited about things. I naturally am careless, I suppose."

"But you should strive against that defect, not state it placently as a fact that you have nothing to do with."

"Well," he answered, "if Miss Graham would take me in hand, perhaps I could catch a little energy from her ; I declare I felt quite elevated when she fired up ; I experienced a kind of noble rage against myself and everything. If she could put me into a fury and reproach me every day, I could do anything."

"Probably Miss Graham has something better to do than to attend to your Greek."

I was glad of this proposal, and said I should like very much to read with him if he really meant to work, and would promise that there should be no more such ridiculous scenes as we had just enacted.

"What ! you really will read with me ?" he exclaimed.

"Yes,—of course ; I scarcely ever have the least chance of being of use ; I cannot think of throwing this little one away. It is so very unsatisfactory to live entirely for oneself."

"There ! you got that notion out of a book,—that is the first thing I have heard you say that did not sound natural and real. 'My dear lord, clear your mind of cant' (The Great Samuel.)"

His brother tried to snub him.

"How do you know what is natural to a conscientious person ? That feeling—that notion does come out of a book, but not the sort of book you mean."

"I meant one of those books that Liz and Lou are so fond of crying over, where the people are so impossibly good and refined and conscientious, and yet so invariably miserable."

"Well, I hate those books too," he answered—"cold, low-spirited things."

Liz and Lou did not look as if their reading had depressed them, and I remarked that I thought so.

"You will change your mind when the next Mudie box comes ; won't she, St. George ?"

"Yes, and people unconsciously imitate what they admire, particu-

larly when set before them in the guise of a superb young heroine, with dark eyes and perfect features that seldom relax into a smile, stern duty being all that remains to her,—love and hope and ease being tragically extinguished."

"Or of a fair girl, all feeling," said the Oubit, sighing; "a creature so horribly conscientious that she nearly cries if a fellow does but read a line out of some heathen Greek without bending his whole soul to the task."

"I am not expected to recognise anyone that I know in the disguise of a girl all feeling!"

"I said a fair girl."

"And I am not fair and not all feeling. I was cross when you were so provoking, that was all."

"You are not fair?"

"No, I am not, and I do not say that to provoke a denial. I do not much care about appearances—at least—"

"That sentence began in a very promising manner," said Mr. Brandon; "but if you think you are not fair, how odd that you should not care?"

"You think, then, that if you were a woman you should care?"

"I am sure of it."

"Perhaps you are not thinking of what I meant."

"I was thinking of that delicacy, that attractiveness and grace—in short, of that beauty which distinguishes your sex."

"But I was only thinking of that beauty which distinguishes one of my sex over others."

"And I understand you to say that you do not care about it?"

"I do not think it would suit me at all. It would want taking care of, like any other gift of God; I should have to change my whole manner and conduct on purpose to harmonise with it. Yes, I think I am glad it is not mine."

"Your present style and manner, then, would not suit a beautiful young woman?"

"No, because it always shows that I am very desirous to please."

"Ah!" said Valentine, "and that you think, if you were beautiful, would turn poor fellows' heads."

"You talk," said Mr. Brandon to me, "as if beauty was a fact and not an opinion."

"It does not much matter which it is, if almost all agree as to its absence or presence."

"Very true," he answered, and laughed as if a good deal amused.

"I say, St. George," said Valentine, "I believe when Miss Graham made that incautious speech, she only meant that she didn't care what *you* and *I* thought of her face."

There was a pause.

"She cannot deny it. I'll give her while I count twelve to do it in."

I looked up at the tall boy and then down at Miss Dorinda's lover, and it seemed to me that there was no need to deny it. To have beauty and captivate Valentine would be very awkward, for I should not be captivated in my turn : to have it and be seen by Dorinda would perhaps make her tremble, and would certainly make her try to prevent my obtaining a friend.

"There!" said Valentine, "the numbers are counted out ; 'She lives and makes no sign.'"

"You need not think my indifference is magnanimous, it is only natural."

Valentine laughed. "I know you consider me nothing but a boy, and I do not care, but really I think you are ten times better-looking than many—indeed, than most girls—far better-looking than Fanny Wilson, or Jane either."

A bell had been tinkling for some time, and I asked what it was, upon which they both rose, and saying that it was the lunch-bell, proposed that we should return to the house.

(To be continued.)

JOHN MARDON, MARINER:
HIS STRANGE ADVENTURES IN EL DORADO.*
BY THE AUTHOR OF "ST. ABE."

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

JOHN MARDON, IN HIS LAST SICKNESS, BEGINNETH HIS STRANGE
NARRATION.

WHITE Marie with the drooping eyes !
San Joseph with the hoarie haire !
Keep greene one spot beneath the Skies,
Keep it right greene and bright and faire,
And soon or later waft me there !
For this is Hell that round me lies,
And this is Hell that round me cries,
Round me and in me Hell doth rise,
With breath to burne and teeth to teare !
White Marie with the drooping eyes,
Keep greene one spot beneath the Skies,
And waft my Soul before it flies,
One little moment, there !

Say, who is *he*, on bended knee
There kneeling ? Woman, answer me !
A Priest ? Fiends seize his hungrie Soul—
I see his lewd Eyes burne and rolle,
I feel his burning breath ;—
A Snake, a Snake ! scourge him away—
White Marie shrive my Soul this day—
A Snake, a Snake, lean, gaunt and gray,
Whose bloodie lips drink death !
Woman, tho' blacken'd be thy skin,
I know thy heart is true within,
But drive *him* hence, the Serpent then,
Nor heark to what he saith.
Hold my hand, Woman, hold my hand !
Poor wretch of an accursëd land,
Thou meanest well, I wis !
And yet, O God, that I should die
Here underneath this burning Skie,

* South America, 16—.

With only thee to watch and crie,
 To close my eyes and kiss !
 Alack, my bones will never lie
 In such a Land as this !

Hold me, and listen ! None shall catch
 My last wild words but thou alone—
 Close fast the door, shut Bolt and Latch,
 Against the Priests ; I hear them groane ;—
 White Marie strike them into stone !
 Come closer, wet my lips ! come near—
 And tremble not,—why shouldst thou fear
 The feeble Worme that struggles here,
 Dark Bird of the bright Zone ?

Poor Bird ! yet thou hast cause enew
 To crie aloud and hide thy head,—
 For I am of that bloodie crew
 Whose skins are white, whose hands are red ;
 Stranger am I, stain'd thro' and thro'
 With blood of thine own duskie hue,
 And all thy harmless kin are dead—
 Tho' thou hast laine upon my breast,
 Oft hast thou started in thy rest,
 Thy hands upon thy wild heart prest,
 Thy bright eyes great with dread.
 Woman, 'twere little blame in thee
 If thou from the curara-tree
 Hadst drawne the juice to poison me,
 Or stabb'd me in my bed.

Like Vultures on thy shore we came ;
 Wild Birds of Preye too fierce to tame,
 Shrieking for carrion, eyes aflame,
 Throats ready, down we pour'd ;
 Before our feet ye sped in flight,
 Legions of creatures black as night,
 Yet gentle, shrieking in affright
 At our accurs'd Horde.

I was young then . . . and I had driven
 Long years before the Winds of Heaven.
 Such sins as never are forgiven
 Had stain'd me black with guilt,
 And yet I had my graine of good,
 Deep down, a gleame scarce understood,
 That made me sick at sight of Blood
 So pitilesslie spilt.

But Drinke drown'd all ; with dizzie brain
 I saw the black Babe hack'd in twaine,
 The Virgin wasted, stabbl'd, and slaine,
 The red Fire passionate and faine

Rising to our fierce cry ;
 Old Lopez led us, imp of Cain,
 And all my mates were men of Spaine,

Bloody and blacke and slie.
 But *I* was born 'mid Mist and Rain,
 In a Greene Isle amid the Maine,—
 Old England ! . . . O to see it plaine,
 The Woods, the Vales, where peace doth reign,

One moment, ere I die !
 Old England ! . . . O to sit and draine
 One cup of Ale in a greene lane,
 And see the gentle village Vane
 Gleame on the cool gray Skie !

At first, it seem'd a wondrous Land
 Strange as a dreame ; for bright as gold
 The great Skie gleam'd ; o'er silvern sand
 Great Rivers marvellously roll'd ;
 And luminous Birds from out the brakes
 Rose like a crimson Cloud and cried,
 And in the waves the Water-Snakes
 Swam gleaming diamond-eyed ;
 And on the banks were forest bowers,
 Lit with great Lamps of burning Flowers,
 Where heavenly Fruits rain'd down in showers,
 And happy Monkies cried.
 All was right pleasant to the eye,
 The Rivers bright, the golden Skie,
 The Jaye and Parrot darting by,
 The Flowers on every side.

And yet I tell thee, weary one,
 That all these things beneath the Sun
 Were treacherous when tried.
 I minde me how, when mad with drinke,
 Two of our Crewe stript on the brinke
 And plunged into the tide,
 One wild shriek rose, I saw them sinke,—
 Suck'd down, they bled and died !
 And in the bright pool of the blood,
 Seeking for morsels of the food,
 Flew Caribs thick as flies,

While gaping hideous from the mud
 Huge Caymans rose, and on the flood
 Leered with their slimie Eyes—
 Nay, while beneath the Skie we slept,
 Small Worms with poison'd stings upcrept,
 And slew both man and beast ;
 And when thro' the green Brake we stept,
 Out with a shriek the Puma leapt
 With white teeth for the feast ;
 And if one pluck'd a branch of wood,
 Wherewith to spit our wretched food,
 The Doome came foul and fleet,—
 For oft we pluck'd that branch of dread,
 The Guaxamax, and they fell dead
 Who tasted of the meate.

Yea, Woman, 'twas a golden land,
 But cold Death crawl'd on every hand
 With countless Eyes, and slew,
 And whom the Reptile and the Flower
 Spared, perish'd ere the evening hour
 By plague and poison-dew.
 Like wither'd leaves in a black bower,
 Tho' the gay Sun shines bright in power,
 Did we the dark Earth strew ! . . .
 But in the Land where I was born,
 'Tis true and gentle night and morn,
 Tho' somewhat sad to view.
 Old England ! O for that gay scene !
 To smell the fields where I have been,
 To see the Folk upon the Greene
 In crimson cloaks so bright and cleane,
 A merrie-hearted crewe.
 And the bells ringing up on high,
 And the Rooks cawing while they flie
 Against the breezie Blue !
 And yet again to thee I crie,
 The Fever-flower, the spotted Snake,
 The bloodie things in bush and brake,
 The murtherous things that crawl and flie,
 Were fairer far beneath the Skie,
 More fair and true, than those who spake
 This human tongue of shame ;
 The bloodiest mouth, the fiercest eye,
 Belonged to those who kill and lye
 In Jesus Christ His name.

I tell thee that in yonder air
Strange Saints shook down their golden hair,
And shuddering look'd with blind sick stare
On bloody Fanes and Temples where,
 O'er Doom's wild mouth of fire,
Vile priests of Baal, more monstrous far
Than Caribo or Juguar,
 Allay'd their lewd desire.
I tell thee, woman, night and day
Christ's picture on the Altar lay,
Yea, also Saintes mild-eyed and gray,
 And the Apostles all.
And thro' the painted pane the ray
 Of Heaven did mildly fall.
All was as peaceful to the sight
 As was the scene outside !
And yet those Shrines, tho' strangely bright,
 Were treacherous when tried.
Treacherous ! lecherous ! black ! accurst !
Where Monsters of the Death were nurst
 To hideous human guise.
Where snake-like Guile and tigerish Crime
Crawl'd battening in the Church's slime,
 Waiting with craftie eyes.
White Marie, are these Monsters thine ?
 O strike them with thy gaze divine !
How long out of thy vestal shrine
 Shall their foul breath arise ?

O let me haste before I fail
 To tell thee what hath brought me low.
It seems like a wild Dreame, a Tale
 Told to mad music, long ago.
Tho' many perish'd of our band,
We ate our way into the Land,
 And gather'd thy black broode
Like fruit ; some held within the hand,
Some shed upon the grass and sand,
 For we were used to blood.
And when two hundred head like Sheep
Were driven together, to the deep,
 Flogging them on we fled
But hearken ! one dark summer Night
I sicken'd of a Serpent's bite,
 And I was left for dead.

A sleepe of death, a dreamless sleepe,
 Long held me ! When I woke I heard
 A strange Voice singing like a Bird ;
 A wild Voice musical and deep,
 Whereby my heart was stirred !
 Upon a Balsam Bed I lay
 In a dark Hut of gentle shade ;
 And at the door in one rich ray
 Of golden sheen a naked Maide,
 Whose soft skin gleamed with amber light,
 Stood singing. Like a Fountain bright
 Rose that soft melodie.
 I lay and listened in strange bliss.
 I look'd, and dream'd. She was, I wis,
 A Maiden fair to see.

Not like our Women over there,
 With their bright ways and golden haire,
 But dark as Dream, yea wildly faire
 As is a Torch burnt low.
 Her bright skin changed like fire, her Face
 Kindled and glistened in its place :
 She had the soft skin of thy race,
 And the mild looks alsoe ;
 A foolish thing with large round Eyes !
 As harmless as a Deer that flies
 To lick the hunter's hand.
 Yea, she licked *mine* ! Nay more, O God !
 Had she not found me on the sod,
 Dying in a strange Land ?
 Had she not bared my Side anon,
 And marking two dark pricks thereon,
 With her lips red and warm
 Suck'd out the Juice, and brewed a Drink
 Of Indian herbs, that from Death's brink
 Woo'd back my wasted Forme ?
 All this, God knoweth, she had done
 For joy of her sweet power,
 And there she stood, and in the Sun
 Sang, shining like a flower.
 Let the World stand ! Let my Sands run
 In silence ! The thread spun
 . . . Hush ! there she bleeds, poor little one,
 Before me at this hour !

THE FAIR PILOT OF LOCH URIBOL.

A YACHTING EPISODE.

BY AN IDLE VOYAGER.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament !"

WORDSWORTH.

On the afternoon of a summer day, a small schooner yacht closely reefed made her appearance off the mouth of Loch Uribol, a long and lonely fjord in the remote Hebrides of Scotland, and while beating to and fro in the open sea in the midst of the squalls from the neighbouring mountains, hoisted the inverted red flag to the foremast as a signal that the parties on board were in need of assistance.

It had been a dark, dry day, with the wind blowing fresh from the west very steady and strong, and the yacht, a tiny thing of fifteen or sixteen tons, with a small cock-pit, had been beating since early dawn across the tossing waters of the Minch, which divides the dark, serrated peaks of Skye from the far-off Outer Isles. Lightly as a bird she had bounded over the great rollers of the sea, splashing the foam over herself from stem to stern, but seldom taking on board a drop of "green." The distance across was thirty miles, and the wind was dead ahead, so that her progress westward was slow indeed. The time slipped by, however ; the basaltic crags of the north-west coast of Skye grew fainter and fainter ; and the islands of the ocean, which at first had been scarcely distinguishable on the horizon, had gradually loomed more and more distinct—stretching in one desolate and lonely darkness from the high hills of Lewis, past the faint, low-lying flats of Uist, to the dark and rocky shores which fringe the cliffs of Barra. Not once in the long day had the sun actually made his appearance. The atmosphere had been full of a palpitating, silvery light, in which the skies seemed close to the earth, and very gray, and the waves of the sea, where they did not break into white foam, unusually black and threatening. Yet it was "good weather," a safe, snug day for sailing, and the sombre, colourless tone of all things—sea, far-off land, and sky—was not without its charms for those who have learned to love the pathetic "neutral tint" of the melancholy Scottish coast.

But as evening approached, the sun looked out from a gray chasm above the out-lying hills, and shed a lurid light over the dancing sea, illuminating to rose colour the white sails of the little yacht, which was by this time within a few miles of the dangerous coast. Just about this time a weather-beaten Highlander, who was steering the little vessel, cocked his eye up to the sunset, and relinquishing the tiller to a young man who sat in the cock-pit beside him, said quietly—

“She’s going to give a puff out o’ the west yonder, and Loch Uribol’s a terrible place for squalls. We’ll take off the foresail altogether, and let her go cannie wi’ mainsail, staysail, and jib.”

Scarcely had the speaker, with the assistance of another man who had been lying listlessly in the forepart of the vessel, carried out his precaution, and taken the foresail down, when the first squall from the land came up white as foam and laid the vessel over to the cooming of the cock-pit. Squall after squall followed, while the light from the sunset grew every moment of a more lurid crimson, streaming with the wind out of a great rent in the vast mountains of cloud. The yacht was too lightly ballasted to carry her canvas well, and more than once the wind struck her so savagely as to threaten to founder her outright, the water passing into the cock-pit in one green torrent and drenching the helmsman to the skin. The sea was comparatively smooth, however, owing to the shelter of the hills. From the dark precipices and distant misty glens the squalls shot out with a fury only realisable by him who has navigated these coasts in a small vessel. With the fury of hate and the strength of despair, so to speak, they plunged one by one upon the schooner, like wild beasts frantically endeavouring to tear her to pieces.

With a light laugh, the helmsman dashed the wet hair out of his eyes, and strained his gaze towards the land.

“Which is the Uribol land?” he cried to the old Celt who had first spoken. “Can you make out the mouth of the Loch?”

The old man shook his head.

“I know fine she lies somewhere in yonder,” he said, “but I’ve never passed the mouth. Luff, sir, luff! We’ll put about directly—there’s a nasty bit o’ water fair ahead.”

The young man uttered an exclamation expressive of impatience.

“Here, Calum, take the helm, and let me have a look at the chart.”

So saying, he again resigned the tiller to Calum, as the old man was called, and plunging down the companion to the cabin, soon re-emerged with the Government chart of the coast in his hand, spreading it out on the “coach-roof,” and following the marks with his finger he studied it attentively, now and then glancing at the land, while the yacht, having put about, was dashing along through squall after squall, and coming nearer and nearer to the shore.

He was a man of eight or nine and twenty, with a rather hand-

some style of face—broad, high brow, a nose of the so-called Grecian sort, and a proud, sarcastic mouth. His skin was dark and tanned, as if he had lived long in the sun of warmer climates. He was clean shaven, all save the upper lip, where he wore a thick flossy moustache, very fair in colour. His eyes were blue and very large, though he had a habit of contracting them very much when he was looking at any person. In his whole person, and in every gesture, there was a certain air which bespoke the gentleman by birth. His expression, nevertheless, was marred by audacity and superciliousness, and his laugh had not the ringing clearness of youth, but sounded hollow at times, with a sort of spasmodic gaiety his face did not share.

As he studied the mysterious lines of the chart, his face grew very black. It was clear that this gentleman, whatever might be his good qualities, possessed a very passionate temper.

"Why the devil did I come here without a pilot?" he exclaimed. "Look here, Calum! the mouth of the loch is full of sunken rocks in every direction. Far out to the right there's Bo Scarbh, a regular reef, three feet under water at high springs; close by—see! there's another, Bo Something Else; and then there's half-a-dozen rocks peppered *here*, and another half-dozen *there*. To crown all, there's only six feet at low water in the deepest part of the channel, although we are drawing seven feet aft; and, by George! the channel itself is only about two cables' length across. It would be certain shipwreck to enter without a pilot. What are we to do?"

It was in answer to this question that Calum recommended that they should signal to the shore for a pilot; and so the little yacht was kept running to and fro on the wind just off the shore. On coming thus close in under the mountains, they could just distinguish, half a mile ahead, the silvern gleam of the mouth of the loch, and, seen from afar, it looked very narrow indeed—only a few yards across. Just inside, as they knew, there was good anchorage in a small snug basin just opposite the "village."

But an hour of great excitement passed, and there was no answer to their signal from the shore. Every instant the squalls grew more terrific, till it seemed the little vessel must be lost indeed. Worst of all, night was near; the hills were already growing dim.

"It's an awfu' coast," said Calum reflectively, as he shook the boat through a violent squall. "I mind once of a smack of a hundred tons being clean foundered just off here. And there wasna any sea: she was running for the south with herring, and had twa or three empty barrels on her deck; and the wind came aff yonder hill and sank her as ye'd sink a spoon in a bowl o' milk. I woudna sail an open boat here for a heap o' money."

"No one appears to take any notice of us," cried the young man. "What is to be done? The boat won't stand much more of this."

"The boat's a good boat," said Calum, "but the nicht's going to

be bad ; and nae yacht o' this size can live if it comes on a gale. If nae man comes off from the shore, we'll just have to run for Loch Uish, straicht down the coast. It's no' a cannie run in the dark, for there's the Mackenzie Rock, and the reef where Sandie Gow lost the *Spell* ; and forbye that, there's the Black Rocks ; but we'll dae our best."

" Humph ! then it's only a chance that we get clear out of this confounded mess ? "

" O ay, just a chance. The folk 'll be awa at the fishing, and it's a bad nicht for a boat like this in the open."

Something in the perfectly unmoved and phlegmatic tone of the speaker took the other's attention, for the young man stared at him for some time with a half comic, half sneering look of astonishment ; and, seeing the grim, weather-beaten features perfectly unmoved, he broke into a hard laugh.

" You take it coolly enough, at any rate," he cried.

" And what for should I no' tak' it coolly ? I'm only a common man, and maun tak' the winds as they come, and earn my breed."

" Can you swim ? "

" Not a stroke," replied Calum, burying his face in his hands to light his black cutty pipe ; while the man at the forepart of the vessel, reclining against the bitts, hummed in a low voice the doleful lively ditty of " Gillie Calum."

Still finding secret amusement in the stolidity of his companions, the young man laughed again ; then, entering the cabin once more, he re-emerged with a fowling-piece, and fired two shots rapidly into the air. Scarcely had he done so, when an enormous black dog sprang up the companion, and, rushing to the bulwarks, gazed eagerly out on the waters.

" Down, Nero, down !" cried the young man. " He thinks I have shot something. Ha ! the noise seems to have attracted attention at last. Look yonder ! "

On a small eminence overlooking the entrance of the loch two or three figures were now dimly seen ; but it was already too dark to make out who and what they were. The twilight had quite fallen, and the wind was blowing with great fury.

" Hang off ten minutes longer," the young man said, " and then, if no one comes, we must risk the run down the coast."

The helmsman nodded, " put about " once more, and ran through the wind. The squalls could still be seen whitening the sea to windward when they struck the water ; but every minute the coast grew dimmer, so that only a very familiar eye could have made out the landmarks.

Ten minutes passed ; and the order was already given to let the vessel run with a free sheet, when Calum, knocking the ashes of his pipe out into the water to leeward, said quietly—

"Wheest a minute! I hear the sound of oars between us and the shore."

Listening intently all could hear the splash, splash of oars coming nearer and nearer. Immediately afterwards a small boat, rowed by a solitary figure, shot out of the shadow of the hills. It seemed to be a rude coble quite at the mercy of the wind, but very skilfully managed. While Calum brought the boat up to the wind, the young man leant over the side of the vessel and regarded the small boat intently. Presently he uttered an exclamation which bore a suspicious resemblance to an oath, and turned angrily to Calum—

"Look there! Confound the idiots! They've sent out a *woman!*"

Calum, who was quite as astonished, but exhibited more self-control, nodded sharply. The boat was indeed rowed by a female, to all appearance strong and young, but her head was covered by a dark hood, and they could not see her face.

Angrily enough Calum addressed the stranger in Gaelic. He was answered in clear ringing tones, in the same tongue; and almost before he could say another word the coble was alongside the yacht, and a light girlish figure, with a speed and agility perfectly marvellous to the southerner, had sprung on board.

It was too dark to distinguish her features plainly, but she seemed fair-complexioned and very young. Her hood had fallen back, and her face and hair were damp with spray. Perfectly lost in amazement at so strange an apparition, the young man stood staring open-mouthed, while the stranger and Calum spoke to each other rapidly in Gaelic.

"What does the girl say?" he at last inquired, impatiently. "Is anyone coming off to pilot us into the anchorage?"

Calum replied in the methodical way peculiar to him and to his class.

"The lassie says there's not a man in the village this night that can pull an oar or draw a net. The whole village is awa after the herring at Loch Uish, and there's nothing left but wives, bairns, and old bed-rid men."

A furious squall struck the yacht as the fisherman spoke, and almost capsized her, for she had entirely lost way through being brought up to the wind. Again addressing Calum rapidly in Gaelic, the girl pushed him aside and seized the tiller.

"Hullo, what are you doing?" cried the young man. "You're never going to trust the boat to a girl like that!"

The girl seemed either to understand what was said, or guessed at the meaning, for she laughed. By this time the yacht was again running rapidly through the water, steered by the stranger.

"The lassie says," observed Calum, phlegmatically, "that there's no better pilot in the place than hersel'; and if we leave the boat to

her she'll take us in all snug. The tide's at the flood, she says, and we'll hae plenty o' water at the narrows."

"But it's nearly pitch dark, and this is a mere child."

"Never you fear, sir. See that! She kens how to steer a boat, and take my word for it, she'll take us safe. I've had worse pilots than this before now. She's a bold lass, and a cannie, and better than many men."

A loud cry from the girl interrupted him. She seemed giving instructions in her own tongue. In a moment he ran forward to assist the other hand with the sheets, while the girl brought the vessel round just a few feet from a large black mass projecting out of the sea.

"That's close work," cried the gentleman, nervously. "I'm afraid we'll come to grief."

The girl spoke again to Calum, and he interpreted.

"That's Dhu Squir, she says. But there's three fathom water to the very edge of the reef. We're coming up to the narrows now, and need every inch o' room."

Another cry from the girl, and the vessel was round again on another tack. They were now quite in the shadow of the hills, and all seemed darkness and confusion, especially to the unaccustomed senses of the young man. To him the land seemed closing in on every side, the mountains towering straight above, the wind coming in all directions. A wild roar was in the air, and the water seemed swirling and boiling below them with an angry roar.

"We're in the narrows now," cried Calum, "that's the boiling o' the tide."

The wind was sweeping dead out of the mouth of the Loch, and again and again the vessel put about, so rapidly, indeed, that she scarcely got way upon her on one tack before she had to come round again. Once, for this reason, she refused altogether to answer the helm in coming round, and seemed drifting right on the rocks of the channel; but in a moment, urged by the girl, Calum boomed out the staysail to windward with an oar, and the vessel slowly completed her swing out. All seemed to grow darker and darker after this, for they got more and more in the shadow of the hills, but by and by the young man saw that they had emerged into more open water, and that several lights, like those of a village, were glimmering from the darkness of the shore. The wind still shrieked loudly.

"All's safe now, sir," said Calum. "We're close to the anchorage, and oot of a' danger."

So saying he ran forward and assisted his fellow-seaman to haul up the chain on deck, that it might run free, and to hoist the anchor over the bows. A minute afterwards the vessel was brought up to the wind, and glided steadily along through smooth water for about a

hundred yards, when the girl cried out to the men forward, and released her hold of the tiller.

The yacht was quite stationary. Down went the anchor, with that delicious sound which only the weary cruiser knows and loves. For some minutes there was confusion in the darkness. The young man went forward to see all snug, and to take a look about him. So far as he could make out in the night, they were in a nice natural harbour, surrounded on every side by hills, and sheltered almost entirely from the wind then blowing.

"Five fathom water," said Calum, hauling in the lead-line; "and a fine soft mud for the bottom. We couldna be in a snugger berth."

The young man who had been plunged in deep reflection, touched him on the shoulder.

"Come aft with me and speak to the girl. In all probability she has saved our lives."

But when they went in search of her she had disappeared, and the old coble in which she had rowed out to their assistance had disappeared also. They strained their eyes into the surrounding darkness, and listened for the sound of oars; but all was quite still, and they could not see a glimpse of the stranger.

AMENDE HONORABLE.

(NOTE ON ARTICLE "PITY THE POOR DRAMA!" IN MAY NO.)

SOME remarks of mine in "Pity the Poor Drama!" have, I am sorry to say, offended Mr. Hollingshead, a gentleman for whom I have great literary esteem. The manager of the Gaiety Theatre writes to say that I have ("unintentionally, he is sure," and he is right) done him "an injustice," and that he has nothing whatever to do with the Restaurant attached to his Theatre. I gather indeed from his letter that he personally regards the Restaurant as out of place so near to a Temple, or pseudo-Temple, of Art; and he is right again: only, can he not hinder the Proprietor from calling his establishment after the theatre it adjoins? However, that is neither here nor there. My present object is merely to disclaim any reflection on Mr. Hollingshead's character, and to rejoice that at least one of our London managers, having read my article with attention, wishes himself presented in his true character of a friend to the best interests of the Drama.

WALTER HUTCHESON.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IRRECONCILEABLE.

I.

"In the *Apology* which Plato gives us, as the speech of Socrates before his judges, there is this remarkable passage : ' Do not be vexed with me for telling you the truth. There lives not the man who can escape destruction if as a born antagonist he opposes you or any other popular majority and endeavours to prevent many unjust and unconstitutional things being done in the state ; but it is necessary that he who will fight this battle for what is righteous, and yet, even for never so short a time, keep himself unharmed, must maintain the privacy of an individual, and take no part in public affairs.'"

Although the distinguished and very wise and humane writer who quotes this passage in his last book goes on to observe that in modern times and in Britain the Antagonist is in no such danger as the Antagonist in Athens in the days of Plato, this is by no means a true judgment. This writer does not fail, indeed, to admit that even now the Antagonist may be in danger of "persecution"—evidently not having present to his mind what a miserable burden that word carries in a compactly-formed and rapidly intercommunicating organisation like modern society. It in fact carries with it an endless scroll of threatenings ; and the formula of to-day is the formula of the age of Plato—*Conform, or we will destroy you if we can.*

The Antagonist or Irreconcileable is not necessarily a haunter of barricades or in any recognised form a social or political conspirator. Neither of these characters would suit me, and in reading these autobiographical notes the reader will please to bear in mind that an Irreconcileable is simply an uncommitted person. He need not be cantankerous ; he need not be ungentle ; he need not be unsociable, when association can be made truthful. His ideals, religious, political, domestic, and other, would be found, when expressed in general terms, to be in accord with those whom most men and women agree to call good, wise, and great. But on the question of methods—that is to say, of the laws and customs directed to the cultivation of these ideals, an Irreconcileable is simply an uncommitted person ; one who not only makes no show of acquiescence in these matters, but who firmly holds aloof from everything which could fairly be held to commit him to any such acquiescence.

Leaving alone the rationale of this position for the present, I will ask leave to begin these Notes with such hints of the character of my father and mother and of my own childhood as may at least help

to make it intelligible from that "historical" or "scientific" point of view which is nowadays supposed to be so very important. But of course these memoranda will contain much more than this—reminiscences of English life during the last thirty years, including public events and public persons. Many of the latter were of the "fag-end" of the Clapham sect. The following paragraphs will give some idea of the manner in which I was likely, from my inherited outlook, to measure men and things.

II.

It was said of my father that he would walk barefoot round the world to rip up a case of oppression, and I dare say it was true. At all events he was a very lively Radical. Yet I cannot remember a single case in which he disregarded constituted authority, or behaved with rudeness to people of rank and station. These things carried with them their own temporary reason of being, and he was not absurd in his behaviour to them. Yet, in case of their violating their reason of being, he would have been capable not only of fearless criticism, but of very cantankerous resistance. For example, he did not make himself ridiculous about poor rates or sewer rates ; but he would have died the death rather than pay a church-rate. At the time of the institution of the new police they were the subject of all manner of popular abuse. Against this treatment of the force, I well remember my father set his face ; but I also remember his leading an officious policeman a dance, for going beyond what my father thought was his duty. Unfortunately I was very young, and can only recollect the thing vaguely. My father was a great walker. Once upon a time he was kept late at the place where he worked as a candle-maker, and had to carry home to my mother, who used to earn money by clipping the wicks, a large bundle of cottons. Now my father's working-place was in a suburb distant very far out of London towards the east, and our house (just taken in anticipation of a change) in another suburb to the northwest ; so that the journey must have been about nine miles. It was one o'clock in the morning when, being at some distance from home, he was tapped on the shoulder by a policeman, with a demand that he should allow the policeman to inspect the parcel. I fancy this must have been at the time when body-snatching was common—perhaps just before the murder of the Italian boy by Bishop and Williams, and that accounts for the policeman's conduct. My father refused, and dared him to interfere. "Very good," said the policeman, "you shall come with me to the station." Now, the station happened to be on my father's road home, so he answered, "All right ; it is on my way." So he set off to walk at full speed, and gave the policeman a breather till they were both close to the station. He then opened the parcel, showed its contents, and giving the policeman his name and that of his employers, said, "You ought to know

an honest man when you see him, and I hope you will next time you meet one." This is my very imperfect recollection of the story, and nobody better saw what humour there was in it than my father.

When I said he *might* be cantankerous, I meant that he was always getting himself and others into hot water through "intervening" on behalf of some poor creature whom he took to be oppressed, or unkindly treated. I call to mind, off-hand, among those he specially stood up for, a policeman who had been, in his opinion, dismissed without good cause; a wife, a poor semi-idiotic creature, whom her husband used undoubtedly to lock up, half starve, and otherwise ill-treat; and last, not least, a poor imbecile old woman, pensioned off to a suburban madhouse by the religious body with which she and my father had been connected. I remember going with him, little as I was, on an expedition, one hot summer day, to "rout up" (as my father put it) this case. And rout it up he did. He was quite irresistible in such matters, and drove all before him. I recollect first his calling out for cross-examination the elderly proprietor of the place, a wizened, bald, obsequious little man, in a dressing-gown, who certainly did not look very prepossessing. His attitude, as he bowed to my father, who was a tall, broad-shouldered man, able to knock him to shivers with a blow, was exactly like that of Mr. Brownlow, in George Cruikshank's picture in "Oliver Twist," when he comes into Oliver's sick room, with his hand under his coat-tail, to enquire of Mrs. What's-her-name how Oliver was getting on. My father next insisted on seeing the poor old woman herself. He was politely told it was not a visitor's day (he had taken very good care it should *not* be a visitor's day), but he stood his ground, and at last the woman was produced and left alone with him. I remember that, to my disgust—for I was a fastidious little cub—she took snuff; but I also remember one pathetic little incident. She was quite "gone" upon most topics, but upon one she was perfectly clear-headed. My father asked her if she had her "privileges"—a word which will not be understood by every reader without explanation. The question meant, Are your Sabbaths your own, and do you hear the preaching that you like? She brightened up at once, and said, "There is a man that preaches, but"—looking round to see if there was any listener near—"he's not . . . not . . . oh, no!" and she shook her head, and looked volumes. The fact was, there was some sort of chaplain, but the poor old soul missed her Sunday refreshment of election and the covenant of grace and imputed righteousness. The conclusion my father came to was that the lunatics at this place were not well cared for, and he brought up Mrs. Blank's case at more than one church meeting. But, though many years afterwards I saw in a newspaper that this very asylum got into trouble and was severely overhauled, it does not now strike me, looking back, that Mrs. Blank was an ill-treated woman.

I may say here, incidentally, and with special reference to the

story of the policeman, that my father always seems to me to have fancied that everybody ought to see at a glance that he was an honest person, and something more. Upon what points in one's idiosyncrasy such a feeling would naturally be founded, I here give no opinion; but I know that until comparatively late in life, I used to have exactly the same kind of feeling, and always resented the merest shadow of suspicion as a gross injury. Having to give references on getting a situation was a sore trial to me.

With reference to his readiness to hunt up cases of social injury or neglect (in which I now think he was often unguarded and, what I have called, cantankerous), I may mention here (what will turn up again, as it has other bearings) that my father had, when young, been a strolling-player, and that he always spoke highly of the manner in which his comrades stood by and helped each other, and often contrasted it with what seemed to him the selfish reticence and unsocial coldness of those classes of Christian professors whom he best knew. "Why," he would say, "when I came to Christ, I almost think I must have left the Christians behind me."

I do not at all found strong conclusions upon this. What I have said is merely explanatory.

To all this must be added a few particulars more. My father had an undoubted tendency to accept republican views of all institutions in which the question of government could arise. He leaned to innovators, if they could make out anything like a *prima facie* case. He had a good ear for music; was a clever mimic; had more than common humour; and, though utterly uninstructed, had a hankering after fine scenery and pictures. He was dainty in his eating and drinking, was a good and painstaking cook, and was not made for poverty.

In some respects my mother was excessively unlike him. She could live on anything, or on next to nothing (which she and the rest of us often had to do); she did not know "Auld Lang Syne" from the "Evening Hymn"; she had no "taste" whatever, and there was always something gaunt about her, in spite of the remains of the considerable personal beauty which she had derived from her mother; while she was impatient of all fastidious ways, means, and ends. Besides these points of difference, she had another. It was evidently essential to her to have a set, consistent body of opinions, and these she held firmly, as far as her capacity led her, with perfect intelligence; but above all, unwaveringly. Not that she did not read and enquire, and constantly pray to be "guided into the truth;" but that she would have a reason for everything, and had never, I am sure, for an instant in all her life, conceived such a thing as sacrificing conviction to authority. At this precise point she and my father touched; but intellectual consistency was not with my father a necessity, and his opinions upon religious questions were much at the mercy of his associations. Now, no change of position or connections

ever made the smallest difference to my mother. Where she hesitated, it was not in the presence of external influence, or great personal authority ; it was from some doubt or feeling of her own. For instance, she had been bred a very strong Calvinist, and had no doubt Calvinism, in its extreme form, was to be found in the Bible. Yet one of my earliest recollections is that of seeing her pause over the wash-tub, with a face on fire with feeling, and, wringing the clothes with a jerk, repeat to herself :—

“ Deep called to deep, I trembling stood ;
I murmured at eternal fate ;
I said, ‘ Can God, for ever blest,
His Jacob love, his Esau hate ? ’ ”

She was, in fact, incredibly compassionate, as far as her imagination carried her into cases of suffering and of moral complication. She would take the part of the most desperate criminal or wrong-doer, if she fancied she saw a leaven of good intent in him. I remember her taking the part of Fieschi, of infernal-machine notoriety, and of Dr. Dillon, of unsavoury fame. The fate of John Brown would almost have killed her. She, like my father, had a taste for going into the wilderness. Nothing deterred her either. If a man was run down, or in danger, or left in the lurch, she would, if possible, hunt him up, and openly side with him, if her conscience would let her ; or would, at least and lowest, suspend her judgment about him, and endeavour to induce other people to do the same. In all this, a natural equity and tenderness, strengthened by a conviction that God was the sole infallible judge, was quickened by her peculiar position as a devout woman. That position was, as far as my experience of life goes, unexampled. She found herself in London, at a distance from all her early religious connections, having brought with her from the influence of those connections a peculiarity of theological belief which absolutely isolated her among religious people, though the intensity of her religious feelings could not allow her to remain apart from the religious life around her. My father had no such peculiarity of opinion ; he had scarcely the intellectual force or tenacity requisite to make him intellectually different from others in such matters ; and so it happened that my mother was constantly surrounded by religious friends of his, among whom she was an alien. The general reader will little know what that means : but I know, and those who have been educated among narrow-minded serious people will know. It meant constant suffering, and, in a mind candid and tenacious, it necessitated, in addition, constant “ trying back,” or re-examination of the inherited point of dissidence. My mother never passed a day without kneeling down and praying that, if she was in error, she might be led into the truth ; and often her prayers were painful and prolonged ; of the order which is known among religious people of a certain class as “ wrestling with God.”

Even if my mother had not been naturally just and candid (and I am sure she was very exceptionally so), painful experiences of this kind would have had a tendency to make her tolerant of what seemed to her or to others erroneous belief or conduct. *Lateat scintillula forsan*—was the formula of her mind, (if I may speak in metaphor,) however black a case might look; though no one could be more innocent of Latin than she was. If she heard a man denounced as an infidel preacher, she would go and hear him. If she was told that a young woman had run wild, she would go and see her. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” was constantly on her lips, not only when circumstances called it forth naturally, but alone and in soliloquy. So was a verse of Pope’s Universal Prayer—

“Teach me to feel another’s woe,
To hide the fault I see”—

and I vividly recall, as I write these words, the pathetic warmth with which, the tears in her eyes, she would finish the verse, with clasped hands, and seemingly unconscious of my presence—

“The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.”

She was also very fond of the lines—

“Seize upon truth, where’er ’tis found,
On Christian or on heathen ground;
The flower’s divine, where’er it grows,
Neglect the prickle and assume the rose.”

I may remark, incidentally, that it is a great mistake to suppose that children can only arrive at the meanings of words by processes similar to those by which we ourselves reach them when older. I knew these lines by heart before I was four years old, and, of course, caught the meaning of the word “assume,” though I was not told it. In fact, I am sure that my mother could not have explained it formally, if I had asked her to do so. Nor did she know anything of the “heathen ground” referred to.

Looking back over these notes of what my parents were like, and asking myself if I have omitted anything important, I feel that perhaps I have understated my father’s natural aptitude in artistic matters. He had been abroad,—to France, if not farther afield,—and he used to speak with great warmth of the pictures in the Louvre. I have known him fall into raptures over a wine-cooler in which most people would have seen nothing: the alto-relievo grapes and vine-leaves had a charm for him. He was a great admirer of beautiful common things, and used occasionally to displease my mother by laying out small sums in trifles of “bigotry and virtue” in which she saw nothing.

Want of taste was one of the most striking of her peculiarities;

want of taste, I mean, in the high and true sense of that expression. It was all the more remarkable that she was a great reader in her way ; which my father never was. I am forced to say that she had a really peculiar want of sensibility in that direction. It followed that she was sometimes unjust to others in matters that she did not understand. Once I remember my father had promised to take me out Maying into the skirts of Epping Forest one Sunday morning. On the previous Saturday evening I had done something to displease her, and she declared I should not go to the Forest with my father on the Sunday. In the morning my father awoke me very early, and with a beating heart I got up, hoping my mother would have changed her mind and would now let me go with my father. But she had not, and she stopped me. As I write these lines, my cheeks burn at the thought of what I suffered from this privation. Yet I am sure my mother, who cared nothing for Maying or forest scenery, had no idea of the severity of the penalty she was inflicting upon me. I was very little indeed—what some people would take for a baby—but what were my feelings when my father brought home the boughs of aromatic white briar, and set them in the grate !

Let me pause to say a word about what I call vindictive punishment of the young. The fault I had committed was a small one ; not at all in the usual line of my faults ; indeed, it was one that I was very, very little likely to repeat. And I think the punishment was wrong in essence, as it certainly was excessive in degree (the latter through my mother's lack of imagination). She had the notion, derived mainly through her religious training, that every fault should be followed by some punishment specially affixed to it, and imposed by some external authority. Alas, it is a very common notion—but without a grain of sense or justice in it. My mother, where her creed did not darken her natural instincts, was the tenderest of women ; but, for all that, the vindictive theory of discipline is simply a relic of savagery, and one of the most godless and detestable of its kind, too.

III.

I have now, perhaps, given such an account of my father and mother as may suffice to account for my being an Irreconcileable. One of the most striking points in the character of my mother was her spontaneous and diffusive devoutness ; my father was often accused of levity, though no one ever suspected the reality of his religious feelings. But my mother's religiousness (so to call it) might almost be described as fierce. In the morning she knelt down against a chair and prayed with us children. In the evening, prayer was of course. But at mid-day she prayed again. It was always aloud, and always kneeling against a chair. In the early part of my childhood there was this peculiarity attending the mid-day prayer. The house of which my parents had a part was exceedingly small, and

the front room on the ground floor, which was our living room, was very low, so that any passer-by could see in. But the window had two shutters, in each of which was a light-hole of the shape of what is, I think, called the "spade" in cards. The light coming in through these holes used to make reflections upon the wall or floor or furniture, and very awful they sometimes were in my eyes. So that the mid-day prayer-time was not without its something that I suppose I may call terror or vague horror. The feeling which these eyelet holes gave me I never remember attempting to describe to my mother, and I am sure, if I could have done so, she would not have understood me.

Once I remember walking with her through a churchyard, which I think was that of West Ham. At all events among the gravestones and the tall grass I lost her for a long time. My fright till I found her was extreme; the idea of losing her at all was bad enough, but to lose her in that tall, damp grass,—ah! how I remember the faint purple mallows that grew with it!—among graves, and in sight of that steeple with a hole in it through which I could see the bell, was maddening. Yet when I had found my mother, by frantically dashing to and fro among the gravestones, she had not an atom of sympathy for me; on the contrary, I got a severe scolding. This sort of thing did me much harm, forming as it did part of the process by which I was being perpetually made to feel that I was alone—a feeling which took possession of me at an incredibly early date.

Those who do not believe in connate tendencies, and that these dominate the life of the individual, will smile—but I cannot help that—when I say that I was born a worshipper, with a strong tendency to mysticism, and a mind that turned naturally to the One true Object of all worship, and found a vivid pleasure in thinking of His presence anywhere and everywhere as a fact. Yet this is as true as that I have eyes of a given colour and stand so many feet and inches high. If my mother had been born in Voltairian Paris, or some worse place, she would have been a worshipper, though by no means necessarily a Christian. The religious training which fell to my lot did, of course, a great deal to colour my feelings in religious matters, but those feelings were in themselves as natural to me as a delight in colour or music. I have never been able to understand the kind of talk which you find in some Broad Church writers about the way in which we have to ascend through our earthly relations to the sense of our heavenly relations. I am perfectly certain it was not my earthly father that gave me my first image or suggestion of God, and that the sensation or sense, so to speak (I know not what word to use) of divine things and of a Divine Being, in whom I lived, moved, and had my own being, was not primarily an instilled sense. At an age which was so early that I dare not even state it, I used to enter into sudden, silent prayer at any and every time of day or night when I was awake. "Thou, God, seest me," were often the only words into which

my feelings shaped themselves ; and the feelings were usually those of awe and happiness mingled.

It will readily be understood—by some people at least—that very early indeed there must have been formed in me, as there was, a feeling that numbers and external authority were in themselves no guides whatever. Indeed, my tendency was from the first to think that the large numbers were usually on the wrong side. “ Go not with a multitude to do evil,” was a favourite text with my mother. Another was, “ In all thy ways acknowledge *Him*; *He* shall direct thy paths.” I can hear her now, repeating the words with heavy emphasis on the “ *He* ” and the “ *Him* ” ; as if to imply, what of course was the lesson she intended, though oftener for herself in soliloquy than for any one else,—namely, “ Never mind what other people think or say or do—you are responsible to God alone in the last resort.”

In the “ yard ” of small houses in which we lived at that time there was a goat, which was allowed to run pretty loose, and with this animal I struck up a friendship. Somewhere close by was a large boys’ school, and of course among these boys my Bible-reading and my serious speeches in rebuke of “ bad words,” fighting, quarrelling, and injustice, caused much amusement. Imagine a small, slight boy, wearing a cap that went all over his head (because he was always having the earache) and walking up and down the “ yard ” half the day, with Dr. Watts’s “ Divine and Moral Songs ” in his hand, and a goat at his side. The humour of the thing could not possibly escape these schoolboys, and I was known among them as the Reverend Mister Billygoat. Yet it must not be supposed that I was a serious prig : on the contrary, I often got into trouble by being so ready to laugh, and the greater number of my offences were, I believe, offences against seriousness. Among the boys I was certainly a favourite rather than otherwise, in spite of something which I shall refer to directly. Perhaps one reason why they liked me was the part I played in releasing them from school very early one morning. The school-room was built upon piles, with of course a staircase. The master, a nice, kind man, who used to be very fond of me, sometimes went home for an hour or two, leaving the pupils to the care, I suppose, of some monitor or usher. When twelve o’clock or four o’clock came—he was always running, and I can see him now trotting along in his grey dressing-gown—he would run to the foot of the school staircase and call out “ All home ! ” upon which the boys broke up school, and came clattering down the ladder like mad, while he ran back home. Well, one morning,—what made me do such a thing I cannot guess,—at about half-past ten, I went to the foot of the staircase, and cried “ All home ! ” The boys must surely have known it was not the master’s voice, but down they came, and off they went. I witnessed the spectacle from a saw-pit in the rear. I am sure I told some one of this, for I told everything in those days, but nothing was ever done to me for it, and I

do not think I was even scolded. It was the kind of trick my father would greatly enjoy hearing of, and the schoolmaster was certainly not offended, for his friendship continued, and I went several times to his house after that little escapade.

Part of the liking of these schoolboys for me came, I dare say, of the fact that I could always help them at some of their lessons. In everything that related to the Bible, and to spelling, I could give them most effectual help; and I must have been very amusing to them, to say nothing of the circumstance that I must have prevented a good many fights. But some boys both disliked and persecuted me; which was, I have no doubt, natural enough. It probably galled them to find a little "runt" of a boy, who was always ill, and never went to school, and was somewhere between five and six years old, knowing better than they did some of the things they were forcibly taught every day with the help of the *argumentum baculinum*; but that was not all. With many faults, and those, of course, greater than I knew or know, I had the reputation of being a little boy who would go through anything rather than tell a "story,"—as I was taught to call a lie. This had several obvious consequences. One was that my word was always taken against that of other boys, and another was that I was sometimes, greatly to my own pain and confusion, put in the position of a referee: "I shall ask Master Blank how it all happened." Naturally Master Blank was unpopular with the *mauvais sujets*, and perhaps with one or two boys who had finer qualities than his own. I used to be very much puzzled with the persistent efforts of certain boys to fight me, *i. e.*, to get me to fight. I now see that it was because they were tired of hearing Aristides called the Just. Aristides was tired of it himself; and never liked it.

There was one other particular in which other boys and I often came into collision. As I used to be ridiculed even at home for excessive personal fastidiousness, endless washings, and defiant shyness in certain particulars, it may well be imagined that, in my casual intercourse with ordinary boys, I found plenty to excite my violent disgust. I certainly did, and am quite sure I never concealed it. Here one of my bad points would be only too sure to come out, —I mean a tendency to absolutely isolating scorn, when once disgust had set in. The utter contempt and turning away with which I always treated anything dirty or indecent must and did make me pretty hotly hated here and there; and the more so as I invariably and savagely "told" of anything that came under the head of what boys in my days called "impudence." The violent disgust which I used to show towards certain people was a frequent subject of rebuke from my parents. My mother used to say that I was "unsanctified," and my father, more angrily, that I behaved "as if the world was not good enough for me." This was an argument of which I never could see the force. There are particulars in which, I suppose, we should

all like to see the world altered ; and, certainly, to try and take some of the nastiness out of it can harm no one.

However, as my chief object in this chapter is to trace in myself the qualities which I obviously inherited from my parents direct, I will say no more of this matter here. From what remoter ancestor I got this unusual fastidiousness (unusual it is, and, I am still told, frantic and impracticable—which I still disbelieve and disregard), I cannot say ; and I also know that it has not reappeared in all my own children.

To pass to more important particulars, in which my parentage can be distinctly, and even strikingly, traced.

When, at the age of about ten, I first came to anything like positive knowledge of the severities of ordinary school discipline, my distress was indescribable. In any case, most people would say it was ludicrous ; some, contemptible. Two boy friends of mine—to one of them I was particularly attached—were at a school where the cane and the rod were both very freely used. The hints they gave me of what daily took place at this “crack” academy (for such it was) made me ill. I scarcely slept at night. It seemed to me that the earth ought to open and swallow up all the schoolmasters. Not the pain alone, or chiefly, but the indignity and indecency, were what upset me. Most desperately upset I was. I heard of one boy getting so many “handers” for not doing his Virgil, that his mother had to poultice him for days. Well, I could not stand it ; and, what is more, I didn’t. I “pegged away” at my parents to use their influence. I pegged away at the boys themselves. I was so shy that to open my lips to strangers was almost impossible to me ; yet when I met the father and mother of these boys, and they spoke to me, I attacked them about the discipline that offended me. And the boys were removed to another school,—not a “crack” place, by any means, but under a good man ; and to that school I went myself.

While I was there, the parents of my young friends were made aware of my own diligence in acquiring knowledge of every kind ; but they did not understand that this arose, not from a sense of duty, but from a natural appetite amounting to greediness, and a natural facility in acquiring. Now I perfectly understood this myself ; was utterly republican ; never claimed, or would for a moment receive, any compliments for what I knew was a natural advantage. But the father of my two friends thought that he could play me off against his own boys, and shame them into more diligence with their lessons. So he invited me to his house to see them one half-holiday—of course, saying nothing about his design. There was a large family of brothers and sisters ; and I can see them all now,—chubby-faced father, chubby-faced mother (a woman of the Mrs. Tulliver stamp), and chubby-faced children,—a large ring of chubby people. I was the only lean, pale person present, and felt a little oppressed by the sense of so much very solid flesh and blood all around me. There was a perfect moun-

tain of seed-cake and bread-and-butter, some of the latter cut thick. The thin bread-and-butter was handed to me, and I took some, of course. But when one of the children (I forget which, only it was one I had not seen before) was going to take a slice of thin, mamma said, sharply, "No, the thick ;" and the child took the thick. This did not suit my republican ideas at all. So, the next time the plate came round, I also took some of "the thick," by way of moral protest. This was rude, but I knew no better. The lady coloured ; but my moral intention was good ; and though I was deeply sorry to do what I did, I was not sorry for having done it.

Worse was to come. After tea, the father began directing the talk into a channel that I did not at all like. He began praising me, and telling me what he had heard about my bookish diligence, and so forth. All this I received with a very bad grace. At last I said point-blank, "I know I am clever, but I was born so." He then said rather pompously, I fancied,—I can see, now, the "dignified" smile he assumed,—"You should leave others to praise you, Master Blank." This gross misconception of my meaning raised my very bad temper, and I replied fiercely, and, I have no doubt, rudely, that I was *not* praising myself, but disclaiming praise. My friend then changed his tactics a little, and bore straight down upon the point he had been aiming at, complaining of the negligence of his own two elder boys, and placing it in contrast with my diligence. There sat my two young friends, ashamed and silent : one of them, the one I liked best, as red as a peony, and looking as silly as a goose. Now, the course I took completely dumfounded the father. I contended that he had not the least business to make his sons learn Virgil ; said I was sure they attended to their lessons as much as was necessary ; insisted that different people were intended to learn different things ; and so on. This went on for some time, my host getting more angry every minute, as, indeed, was I. At last he got up, and left the room, red with passion, his eyes almost starting out of his head, and saying, "Master Blank, young people *think* old people to be fools, but old people *know* young people to be fools." I only laughed, and cried, "Ha, ha ! do you call that an argument ?" What a ludicrous affair between a boy of ten or eleven, and a man of five-and-forty ! I was ill-mannered, but morally right ; for he was clearly wrong in inviting me to meet his boys, my friends, on the usual footing of a visitor, and then turning me into an instrument for putting them to shame. It was dishonourable behaviour towards all three of us, and, unless I had been the boy I happened to be, was a thing calculated to make our future intercourse rather unpleasant.

AN IRRECONCILEABLE.

(*To be continued.*)

THE LAUREATE OF THE NURSERY.

IN an article entitled "Child-life as seen by the Poets," published in the May number of this Magazine, there appeared an allusion to the Scottish poet William Miller, whose "Wonderfu' Wean" was printed in full to justify, if justification were needed, the high praise bestowed on its writer as one of the sweetest and truest lyric poets Scotland has ever produced. The eulogy pronounced on Miller was, as I happen to know, rather under than over coloured. No eulogy can be too high for one who has afforded such unmixed pleasure to his circle of readers ; who, as a master of the Scottish lyrical dialect, may certainly be classed alongside of Burns and Tannahill ; and whose special claims to be recognised as the Laureate of the Nursery have been admitted by more than one generation in every part of the world where the Doric Scotch is understood and loved. Wherever Scottish foot has trod, wherever Scottish child has been born, the songs of William Miller have been sung. Every corner of the earth knows "Willie Winkie" and "Gree, Bairnies, Gree." Manitoba and the banks of the Mississippi echo the "Wonderfu' Wean" as often as do Kilmarnock or the Goosedubs. "Lady Summer" will sound as sweet in Rio Janeiro as on the banks of the Clyde. The pertinacious Scotchman penetrates everywhere, and carries everywhere with him the memory of these wonderful songs of the nursery. Meantime, what of William Miller, the man of genius who made the music and sent it travelling at its own sweet will over the civilized globe ? Something of him anon. First, however, let us look a little closer at his compositions, and see if the public is right or wrong in loving them so much.

Having before me as I write a pretty considerable quota of Miller's writings, and reading them with as dispassionate a sympathy as possible, what strikes me first is their freedom from the false and meretricious simplicity of two-thirds of the productions of the Scottish rural Muse. They are as noticeable for outspoken naturalness of manner as for fineness of poetical insight. They are such words as a happy father might say to his children, if he were furthermore a poet with a fine eye for imagery, and a singer with a delicate ear for music. They are plaintive, merry, tender, imaginative, poetical, just as the light happens to strike the hearth where the poet sits. We find ourselves in a lowly Scottish home to begin with ; it is ten o'clock at night, and wee "Willie Winkie," a tricksy

spirit who is supposed to run about the town ready to astonish any refractory child who won't go to sleep, is wandering

“Up-stairs and down-stairs
In his nicht-gown !”

The mother sits with the child, who is preternaturally wakeful, while Willie Winkie screams through the key-hole—

“Are the weans in their bed ?
For it's now ten o'clock !”

One wean, at least, utterly refuses to sleep, but sits “glowrin' like the moon ;” rattling in an iron jug with an iron spoon, tumbling and crowing like a cock, slipping like an eel out of the mother's lap, crawling on the floor, and pulling the ears of the cat asleep before the fire. No touch is wanting to make the picture perfect. The dog is asleep—“spelder'd on the floor”—and the cat is “singing gray thrums” (“three threads to a thrum,” as we say in the south) to the “sleeping hen.” The whole piece has a drowsy picturesqueness which raises it far above the level of mere nursery twaddle into the region of true *genre*-painting. The whole “interior” stands before us as if painted by the brush of a Teniers ; and melody is superadded, to delight the ear. Are we in town or country ? It is doubtful which ; but the picture will do for either. Soon, however, there will be no mistake, for we are out with “Lady Summer” in the green fields, and the father (or mother) is exclaiming—

“Birdie, birdie, weet your whistle !
Sing a sang to please the mean !”

Still more unmistakable is the language of “Hairst” (the lovely Scottish word for Autumn) ; and I quote the poem in all its loveliness :—

Tho' weel I lo'e the budding spring,
I'll no misca' John Frost,
Nor will I roose the summer days
At gowden autumn's cost ;
For a' the seasons in their turn
Some wished-for pleasures bring,
And hand in hand they jink about,
Like weans at jingo-ring.

Fu' weel I mind how aft ye said,
When winter nights were lang,
“I weary for the summer woods,
The lintie's tittering sang ;”
But when the woods grew gay and green,
And birds sang sweet and clear,
It then was, “When will hairst-time come,
The gloaming o' the year ?”

Oh ! hairst-time's like a lipping cup
 That's gi'en wi' furthy glee !
 The fields are fu' o' yellow corn,
 Red apples bend the tree ;
 The genty air, sae ladylike !
 Has on a scented gown,
 And wi' an airy string she leads
 The thistle-seed balloon.

The yellow corn will porridge mak',
 The apples taste your mou',
 And ower the stibble riggs I'll chase
 The thistle-down wi' you ;
 I'll pu' the haw frae aff the thorn,
 The red hip frae the brier—
 For wealth hangs in each tangled nook
 In the gloaming o' the year.

Sweet Hope ! ye biggit ha'e a nest
 Within my bairnie's breast—
 Oh ! may his trusting heart ne'er trow
 That whiles ye sing in jest ;
 Some coming joys are dancing aye
 Before his langing een,—
 He sees the flower that isna blawn,
 And birds that ne'er were seen ;—

The stibble rigg is aye ahin',
 The gowden grain afore,
 And apples drop into his lap,
 Or row in at the door !
 Come, hairst-time, then, unto my bairn,
 Drest in your gayest gear,
 Wi' *soft* and *winnowing* *win's* to cool
 The gloaming o' the year !

Is there in any language a sweeter lyric of its kind than the above ? Not a word is wasted ; not a touch is false ; and the whole is irradiated with the strong-pulsing love of the human heart. It is superfluous to indicate beauties, where all is beautiful ; but note the exquisite epithet at the end of every second stanza, the delicious picture of the Seasons dancing round and round like children playing at "jing-a-ring," and the expression "soft and winnowing win's" in the last verse. My acquaintance with Scottish rural poetry is not slight ; but I should look in vain, out of Tannahill, for similar felicities of mere *expression*. Though there is nothing in the poem to match the perfect imagery of "Gloomy Winter's now awa'," I find here and elsewhere in Miller's writings a grace and genius of style only achieved by lyrical poets in their highest and best moments of inspiration. As to the question of locality, we may be still in doubt. There is just enough of nature to show a mind familiar with simple natural effects, such as may be seen by any artizan on the skirts of every

great city ; but not that superabundance of natural detail which strikes us in the best poems of Burns and Clare. Nor is there much more specifically of the country in "John Frost." It is an address which might be spoken by any mother in any place where frost bites and snow falls. "You've come early to see us this year, John Frost!" Hedge, river, and tree, as far as eye can view, are as "white as the bloom of the pear," and every doorstep is as "a new linen sark" for whiteness.

"There are some things about ye I like, John Frost,
And itheras that aft gar me fyke, John Frost ;
For the weans, wi' cauld taes,
Crying 'shoon, stockings, claes,'
Keep us busy as bees in the byke, John Frost.

"And gae 'wa' wi' your lang slides, I beg, John Frost !
Bairns' banes are as bruckle's an egg, John Frost ;
For a cloit o' a fa'
Garn them hirple awa',
Like a hen wi' a happyt leg, John Frost."

This is the true point of view of maternity and poverty. "John Frost" may be picturesque enough, but the rascal creates a demand for more clothing and thicker shoes, and he lames and bruises the children on the ice. "Spring" is better, and furnishes matter for other verses.

"The Spring comes linking and jinking through the woods,
Opening with gentle hand the bonnie green and yellow buds,—
There's flowers and showers, and sweet song of little bird,
And the gowan wi' his red croon peeping through the yird."

But the final consecration, here as before, is given by the Bairns :—

"Boon a' that's in thee, to win me, sunny Spring !
Bricht cluds and green buds, and sange that the birdies sing ;
Flower-dappled hill-side and dewy beech sae fresh at e'en ;
Or the tappie-toorie fir-tree shining a' in green—

"Bairnies bring treasure and pleasure mair to me,
Stealing and speling up to fondle on my knee !
In spring-time the young things are blooming sae fresh and fair,
That I canna, Spring, but love and bless thee evermair."

The last line of the first verse is perfect.

Such are some of the little green glimpses of nature to be found in Miller's songs ; but the interior-glimpses are far more numerous, from the picture of the "Sleepy wee Laddie," who *won't* rise till his mother "kittles his bodie" or "pouthers his pow with a watering-can," down to the proud king of the farm-yard, with his coat of ruddy brown waved with gold, and his crimson crown on his head, "tuning his pipes to Cockie-leerie-la !" The whole ethical range of these

pictures is summed up in such pieces as "Gree, Bairnies, Gree!"—before quoting which, let us take one last glimpse into the Interior, on a frosty night, while the father is making "rabbits on the wall," to amuse the little ones, and others play on the whistle, saddle and ride the dog, and make a cart of the kitchen ladle. The mother is the speaker, and the words seem to well up from the fulness of her heart, as we see her looking on :—

OUR OWN FIRE-END.

When the frost is on the grun',
 Keep your ain fire-end,
 For the warmth o' summer's sun
 Has our ain fire-end ;
 When there's dubs ye might be laird'd in,
 Or snaw-wreaths ye could be smoor'd in,
 The best flower in the garden
 Is our ain fire-end.

You and father are sic twa,
 Roun' our ain fire-end ;
 He mak's rabbits on the wa',
 At our ain fire-end.
 Then sic fun as they are mumping,
 When to touch them ye gae stamping,
 They're set on your tap a-jumping,
 At our ain fire-end.

Sic a bustle as ye keep
 At our ain fire-end,
 When ye on your whistle wheep,
 Round our ain fire-end ;
 Now, the dog maun get a saddle,
 Then a cart's made o' the ladle,
 To please ye as ye daidle
 Round our ain fire-end.

When your head's laid on my lap,
 At our ain fire-end,
 Taking childhood's dreamless nap,
 At our ain fire-end ;
 Then frae lug to lug I kiss ye,
 An' wi' heart o'erflowing bless ye,
 And a' that's gude I wish ye,
 At our ain fire-end.

When ye're far, far frae the blink
 O' our ain fire-end,
 Fu' monie a time ye'll think
 On our a'n fire-end ;
 On a' your gamesome ploys,
 On your whistle and your toys,
 And ye'll think ye hear the noise
 O' our ain fire-end.

The "best flower in the garden," assuredly, though the shortest in its bloom, to be remembered ever afterwards by the backward-looking wistful eyes of mortals that are children no more! And if ever there should enter into the hearts of such mortals those thoughts which wrong the brotherhood of nature and all the kindly memories of the hearth, what better reminder could be had than those words of the toiling, loving mother, seated in the fire-end, while winds shake the windows and sound up in the chimney with an eerie roar:—

GREE, BAIRNIES, GREE.

The moon has rowed her in a cloud,
Stravaging win's begin
To shugle and daud the window-brods,
Like loons that wad be in!
Gae whistle a tune in the lum-head,
Or craik in saughen tree!
We're thankfu' for a cozie hame—
Sae gree, my bairnies, gree.

Though gurgling blasts may dourly blaw,
A rousing fire will thow
A straggler's taes, and keep fu' cosh
My tousie taps-o'-tow.
O who would cuie your kail, my bairns,
Or bake your bread like me?
Ye'd get the bit frae out my mouth,
Sae gree, my bairnies, gree.

Oh, never fling the warmsome boon
O' bairnhood's love awa' ;
Mind how ye sleepit, cheek to cheek,
Between me and the wa' ;
How a' kind arm was owre ye baith :
But, if ye disagree,
Think on the saft and kindly soun'
O' "Gree, my bairnies, gree."

That, again, seems to me a perfect lyric, struck at once, in the proper key, and thoroughly in sympathy with nature. Perhaps its full flavour can only be appreciated by those familiar with the *patois* in which it is written.

Gae whistle a tune in the lum-head,
Or craik in saughen tree !

Music and meaning are perfectly interblended.

If my object in writing were merely to demonstrate the poetic merit of William Miller, I might go on quoting piece after piece, till I had transcribed his entire nursery-repertoire. At least ten of his pieces are (to use a phrase of Saint-Beuve's) *petits chefs d'œuvre*: ten

cabinet pictures worthy of a place in any collection. Few poets, however prosperous, are so certain of their immortality. I can scarcely conceive a period when William Miller will be forgotten ; certainly not until the Doric Scotch is obliterated, and the lowly nursery abolished for ever. His lyric note is unmistakeable : true, deep, and sweet. Speaking generally, he is a born singer, worthy to rank with the three or four master-spirits who use the same speech ; and I say this while perfectly familiar with the lowly literature of Scotland, from Jean Adams to Janet Hamilton, from the first notes struck by Allan Ramsay down to the warblings of "Whistle Binkie." Speaking specifically, he is (as I have phrased it) the Laureate of the Nursery ; and *there*, at least, he reigns supreme above all other poets, monarch of all he surveys, and perfect master of his theme. His poems, however, are as distinct from nursery gibberish as the music of Shelley is from the jingle of Ambrose Phillips. They are works of art,—tiny paintings on small canvas, limned with all the microscopic care of Meissonier. Possibly, indeed, they are not large enough or ambitious enough to attract those personages who are infected with Haydon's yearning for an enormous canvas and Gaudish's appreciation of "Igh Art ;" yet it is not improbable that it required more genius to produce them than to mix up Euripides and water into a diluted tipple for groggy schoolmasters, or to indulge in any amount of what Professor Huxley styles "sensual caterwauling." The highest praise that can be said of them is that they are perfect "of their kind." That kind is humble enough ; but humility may be very *strong*, as it certainly is here.

And now, what of William Miller himself ? Is he living or dead, rich or poor, sickly or well, honoured or neglected ? He is alive, certainly very poor, sickly to extremity, and, so far at least as practical sympathy goes, neglected by the generation which owes him so much. My informant, indeed, describes him as a "cripple for life." He resides, to his misfortune, in the depressing city of Glasgow, with its foul air, its hideous slums, and its still more hideous social life. Were my power equal to my will, this master of the *petit chef d'œuvre* should be transported forthwith to some green country spot,—some happy Scottish village, where, within hearing of the cries of children, he might end his days in peace, and perhaps sing us ere he dies a few more songs such as "Hairst" and "Spring." Then might he say again, as he said once, in his own inimitable manner—

"We meet wi' blithesome and lithesome cheerie weans,
Daffing and laughing far adoun the leafy lanes,
Wi' gowans and buttercups busking the thorny wands,
Sweetly singing wi' the flower-branch waving in their hands !"

There might the Laureate of the Nursery enjoy for a little while the feeling of real fame, hearing the cotter's wife rocking her child to

sleep with some song he made in an inspired moment, watching the little ones as they troop out of school to the melody of one or other of his lays, and feeling that he had not lived in vain—being literally one of those happy bards whose presence “brightens the sunshine.”

To honour a poet like William Miller is not easy ; he seizes rather than solicits our sympathy and admiration ; but when the thousands who love his music hear, as I have heard, that his fellow-citizens are raising a Testimonial in his behalf,* to show in some measure their appreciation of his genius, help of the most substantial sort is certain to be forthcoming in abundance. Wherever Scottish speech is spoken and wherever these words penetrate, there will awaken a response. Miller's claim to the gratitude of his countrymen is unmistakable. If that claim were contested, every child's voice in Scotland should be raised in protest, and every Scottish mother and father would be convicted of worse than lack of memory—the lack of heart. As for myself, after having indicated very briefly how Miller's compositions affect me personally, and the high poetical place I would assign them had I the will or the power to pronounce literary judgments, I can but wish William Miller God speed, and (in the words of one of his own songs) “a coggie weel fill'd and a clean fire-end” so long as he lives to wear those laurels which have been awarded to him, north of the Tweed, by universal acclamation.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

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LITERARY LEGISLATORS.

No. V.—MR. AND MRS. FAWCETT.

“WE seem to be coming on days when any Tory can carry an English county, and no Liberal can carry an English borough.” This agreeable intimation is from the *Spectator* of the 15th of June. I neither affirm nor deny, and do not think that particular way of looking at the matter a very important one, until, at the least, we have made up our minds what a Tory is, and what a Liberal is. Mr. T. Hughes is counted among Liberals, but if sane human beings can classify him as anything but a good-natured Tory, warmed up by the most modern distillations from the New Testament, I am only fit for a madhouse. Ten times rather would I trust my personal liberties in the hands of Mr. Henley or of Archdeacon Denison than in those of at least half the “Liberals” in the House of Commons; and if I were called upon to decide, as a matter of immediate expediency, to abolish one House of the legislature, it would not be the Upper that would, by my sentence, go to the wall. It is hard to have to choose between King Log and King Stork, but if the choice must be made, give me King Log. Of course this is a sentiment that could only come from a person who was profoundly unimpressed with the uses of government. And indeed, it was with the deepest regret that I found the great experiment that was being carried out by main force at Newcastle come so rapidly to an end. One had earnest hopes that the strike of police might last so long that the inhabitants would wake up to the consciousness that they could do without them, and that a general “barring-out” of Home-Secretaryism, Scotland-yardism, and the like, might be the issue. We would then have discovered over again how small a part of the ills men endure it is which laws and kings can either cause or cure; and a paltry strike of a few policemen would have been, in effect, the compulsory origination of something like a true republic. It wakes you with a chuckle in the small hours to think what would have been the amazement of Europe and America, the bewilderment and humiliation of statists and jurists, to discover that a voluntary committee of public safety, which cost about nothing, accompanied by the abolition of sewers’ rates, lighting rates, poor-rates, police-rates, assessed taxes, excise duties, and the rest of that breed, with the consequent devolution of the cognate matters upon voluntary effort, could make a town comfortable, keep it healthy, and leave room for the development of a truly national spirit among all, instead of the bastard rage which now does duty among a few.

enlightened cads for the thing which has been rated and taxed and balloted and representationed and worried out of Englishmen. "Order reigns in Newcastle. Man-traps and spring-guns set here, for Secretaries, Under-Secretaries, Prime-Ministers, Tax-Gatherers, and Police. Down with the representation of the people!" This placard might have appeared upon the earthworks which would have had to be thrown up around the town, and what could anybody have done? If the State of Newcastle to herself had proved but true, who could have made her rue? A question might have been asked in the House of Commons, and the foreign and coast-wise relations of the port might have proved difficult; but we must not forget what happens when a man puts his head between his legs and runs at a mad dog—the animal is too much astonished to do anything. Again: in my first game of chess I got a fool's-mate, which was natural, considering that I began without knowing the moves. But, in my second, which began at eleven at night, my untutored but brilliant and versatile evolutions with the knight sent my opponent home at two in the morning with the barren triumph of a stale-mate. Now, in politics, every man has already learnt the fool's-mate: for we all know that a policeman can take you to the station-house. But you cannot take a whole colliery port to the station-house, and I am persuaded that even before stale-mate could have been reached, the political problem (I say "the" advisedly) would have been solved. The great lessons of "Gheel, the city of the Simple" would have been illustrated over again in the face of the Universe. Forceful Taxation would have been replaced by the political Offertory. Centralization would have died the death. One fact would have been worth a thousand arguments. *Dis alter visum*, and the "solution walking" being thus denied to us, we are remitted to other chances.

Mr. Fawcett, professor of political economy in the University of Cambridge, and one of the members for Brighton, is an Intellectual Radical of the type that still believes in *laissez-faire*, but with what I should call the shortcomings that attach to every *laissez-faire* politician who approaches the great problem from the economic side. His line of thought, fairly "produced," leads to the minimising of governmental interference, but so long as he announces his belief in national education, it is impossible to rely on his consistency. It is impossible, for the same reason, to rely on Mr. Mill's; and an odd shock comes over one, at the end of his Political Economy, in reading the words:—"In the matter of education, the intervention of government is justifiable, because the case is not one in which the interest and judgment of the consumer" [who is the consumer?] "are a sufficient security for the goodness of the commodity." Mr. Herbert Spencer has expressed his surprise that Mr. Mill should write like this, and well he might. It is perfectly obvious that there is no kind of

paternal government whatever which such an argument may not be made to support. But to return,—Mr. Fawcett is a very able and highly cultivated man, and he is, in point of fact, the best politician of his class now in the House of Commons. His Liberalism is not a "boiled tulip," and his influence, so far as it consistently "produces" his first principles, is in the direction of the "walking solution" of which the gods cheated us at Newcastle. He is not a new man, like Mr. Harcourt ; he has shown *his* hand, and no one doubts his entire sincerity of political purpose. Indeed, his sincerity is the first thing that strikes one about him. Such fire as he has is of the kind that shows itself in steady and "gritty" persistence, rather than in radiant heat, but he can warm up in a sufficiently attractive manner—as when he declared, not long ago, that he would rather never enter the House of Commons again than be a party to enacting a Permissive Prohibitory Bill. He is not that confused and confusing person, a Working-man's Liberal, and has the courage to oppose the Payment of Wages Bill on the well-known grounds of the school to which he is affiliated, and in all his procedure, notably in the "tussle" with government before Whitsuntide, he showed that he, at least, possesses that intellectual tenacity, which I said, last month, was being hurried away to the limbo of lost virtues ; nay, that he possesses something better still, or as good : namely, the instinct that if moral steadfastness should happen to stand in the way of the everlasting question—How is the government to be carried on ?—the latter must take its chance. It is a great point that one knows him and can predict his vote upon almost any conceivable question. This is much more than can be said for every Liberal. Mr. Stansfeld, for example, would, if he were an independent member, be a dark horse, except so far as his *morale* would guide one in guessing at what his exact attitude would be on particular questions. He is the essence of candour when the hour has struck, but you cannot add him up beforehand as easily as you can Mr. Fawcett. He has much more general plasticity and is not so easily disturbed as the member for Brighton. You may say of Mr. Fawcett that he brings to every question, and every situation, a prepared set of convictions ; and so he ought. But the *method* of his mind seems to me monotonous. This is a thing which is less to my taste, though it is doubtless the essential condition of the successful working of a mind like Mr. Fawcett's. It is well known that Mr. Fawcett was made blind early in life by the accidental explosion of a gun ; and I have often wondered, not only as to him but as to the blind in general, what particular mental and moral short-comings may result from missing the light and shade of the human countenance, with all the peculiar suggestions that it must convey. We all know, in our own experience, how painful it is to have to listen to a speaker, even when we know him well, without seeing his face ; And, whatever one sense, put upon its mettle and

finely practised, may do to supplement another, there must still be things it cannot do. Surely no one who has at all studied the complex ways in which we get the kind of experience on which much of our moral and other apprehensiveness is founded will think speculations of this kind wire-drawn. I should myself fancy that if there were anything pragmatal (to use a rough-and-ready word just as it occurs to me) in a man's nature, it would be rather aggravated by such a calamity as blindness,—supposing the nature to be, like Mr. Fawcett's, one of great resisting power in other respects. But any feeling of regret at this would be lost in the admiration created by the gallant stand made by a high-strung nature against such a great misfortune.

It would no doubt be a crude thing to say that Intellectual Radicalism of the old school is played out. The Cobden Club would certainly maintain that never were the principles of Cobden so widely influential as they are now: and in the person of Mr. Fawcett we have an Intellectual Radical of the old tradition, who has made his power felt in the House of Commons, and who could, in case of need, make an appeal to the country at large which would be listened to. But for all that, it is the fact that watchwords of Mr. Fawcett's school are not the things to conjure by that they once were. In the debates, and still more in the close quarters of the Select Committees, you can plainly discern how loosely the old harness sits on the Liberal mind. Some of us can see now, and many more will in a few years see all the grotesqueness of the kind of comment which has lately been applied to Mr. Bright. Take a short specimen from an article which appeared in the *Economist* last November:—

“Everybody will feel the liveliest satisfaction that one of our greatest orators, most imaginative political thinkers, and at bottom, we firmly believe, most sensible public men, should be able to return to his place in parliament. Mr. Bright is, with all his reputation for passion and vehemence of speech, a thoroughly sober, and, in a certain sense, even conservative politician. . . . His presence in parliament, and his presence as an independent member, will do more than anything else to moderate that irritability of desire for change which has attacked some of the younger members of the party, and has gained a certain influence also amongst the people. If any single man can check the premature and eccentric attacks on the constitution which have lately sprung into fashion, Mr. Bright is the man. Besides this, he has gained all his influence by his thorough-going Radicalism. . . . [Yet] we may be sure that, on the whole, [his] authority will be used on the side of moderation. The great ‘tribune of the people,’ as he used to be called, has mellowed in later life into a statesman who, though he has not deserted one of his old principles, has gained the reputation of standing on the ancient ways in his mode of supporting them.”

One can scarcely go wrong in assigning the authorship of these sentences ; they seem to be from the pen of one of our ablest and most accomplished politico-literary men ; and they have a sort of truth, they have even a sort of *much* truth in them. But that state of mind in the people and in Parliament to which they point is a very odd one. There is something very "Conservative" about Mr. Bright, and its roots are in his *morale*, quite outside of his political beliefs. Still for all that, principles were made to be used, and if they lead naturally up to "eccentric attacks upon the Constitution," so much the worse for the Constitution. That is what Intellectual Radicalism personified would have to say about the matter. As a question of expediency, I should myself very strongly condemn such "eccentric attacks," especially when made from an economic point of view; being profoundly certain that a nominally "pure" and rigidly economical system of public expenditure would be a nest of unclean birds, a centre of abomination. If you refuse to permit liberal constructions and a good deal of winking in practice, you may make up your mind to part even with common honesty ; for that virtue will not dwell within hail of economic purity of the sort that Intellectual Radicalism loves. It would be a happy thing for England—and *her colonies*—if the many wise words which have been written on these matters by Mr. Helps had much chance of being considered.

Deferring to another paper some sentences upon some of the final causes of the confusion into which the Liberal cause is just now thrown, I pass on to say a word or two about Mrs. Fawcett. She has not yet taken the oaths and her seat, but really it is hardly possible to think of her except as an absentee member of the House. The forms which her political energy and ability have taken happen to suggest things which lie near to the roots of some of our confusions just now. Take the question of giving women votes. We are at once confronted by a dilemma that remits us to the certain but forgotten truth that Government means force. To the citizen at home it means, and means only, If you do so-and-so, or omit to do so-and-so, we will fine, flog, hang, or imprison you. To the foreigner, it means, If you do so-and-so, or omit doing so-and-so, we will deal with you by means of torpedoes, mitrailleuses, and rifled cannon. No doubt the hope of Humanity is that we may all some day form a sort of genial committee of general welfare ; and we may use government as an organising power for certain non-aggressive ends ; but always the *government* element is obviously one of force. The Post Office is a Government institution ; but it is supported in its position by penalties which imply force in the background. Now suppose in a community consisting of eleven thousand women and nine thousand men the eleven thousand women out-voted the men in favour of going to war, how are the nine thousand men to be compelled to fight ? I rather think the collective manhood of that community would say to

its collective womanhood, "Vote away, my dear, but I shall not fight ; and if you are too troublesome, I shall carry you up to bed and turn the key on you." Again : it is easily made out (and no one more firmly holds it than I do) that the rights of human beings—men, women, and children—are equal ; but how does it follow that babies should have votes ? The principle of indirect representation stands admitted till they do have them. Besides, there may be a great many open questions concerning representative government itself, which forbid our treating the right to vote as an essential part of political equality. Again : we should all be equal in the eye of the law ; but it does not follow that the way to carry this out is to give a woman every right that a man has, in money matters or in others. Suppose (I am thinking of a passage in Blackstone) it was the common law of England that a man might beat his wife with a stick no stouter than his thumb, would it follow that women should immediately be invested, by statute, with a similar right, or would it not rather be said that it was desirable to prevent beating on both sides ? I am of opinion that, so long as the bases or first assumptions of certain laws of ours remain what they are, to give women "equal rights" in every case with those of men, would lead to most flagrant injustice as against the latter. These are, of course, only the roughest hints of what is suggested to me by the turn things are threatening to take in these days of intellectual mob-law, and flogged-up factitious public opinion. But I do not profess to have thought these matters out fully in their new aspects ; and I am dead beaten when I find that the same type of Radical will support compulsory secrecy of voting applied to all for the "protection" of a certain number, and then go and oppose the Payment of Wages Bill. It is an inhuman idea ; but I should almost have liked to see Mr. Bright forced to come up to the House and vote in every grave division of the last two sessions. It would have been a real pleasure to see him "stand upon the ancient ways," and, laying his hand on his heart, vote away upon certain very modern questions. We shall never quite forgive him for being so unwell just when we wanted to put him through his paces—as a Conservative member.

HENRY HOLBEACH.

P.S. Since the foregoing was in type, I have read the following in the newspapers :—"THE COBDEN CLUB.—The Committee of the Cobden Club have decided that, in the presence of the grave events connected with free trade on the continent of Europe and in the United States, it is advisable that an International Conference on the subject should be held in London in the early part of next year, and that in consequence the usual dinner should be deferred for the present." I am glad to find the Cobden Club has the grace to put off a dinner in the presence of these "grave events."

LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE.

Poor Rose ! I lift you from the street—
Far better I should own you
Than you should lie for random feet
Where careless hands have thrown you.

Poor pinky petals, crushed and torn !
Did heartless Mayfair use you,
Then cast you forth to lie forlorn,
For chariot wheels to bruise you !

I saw you last in Edith's hair.
Rose, you would scarce discover
That I she passed upon the stair
Was Edith's favoured lover,

A month—“a little month”—ago—
O theme for moral writer !—
Twixt you and I, my Rose, you know,
She might have been politer ;

But let that pass. She gave you then—
Behind the oleander—
To one, perhaps, of all the men,
Who best could understand her,—

Cyril, who, duly flattered, took,
As only Cyril's able,
With just the same Arcadian look
He gave, last night, to Mabel ;

Then, having waltzed till every star
Had paled away in morning,
Lit up his cynical cigar,
And tossed you downward, scorning.

Kismet, my Rose ! Revenge is sweet,—
And yet old memories quiver ;
You shan't be trodden in the street,
I'll drop you in the River.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

BARNEY GEOGHEGAN, M.P., AND HOME RULE AT ST. STEPHEN'S.

ST. STAVEN'S, APRIL 1ST, 18—.

IT was Father O'Swill, at the instigashun of the Devil himself, an' no other—for it's an infernal shrape I'm in threw his interfairence—got me to this place, an' I only wish I was well out ov it, with me head on me shoulders an' me money in me pockets, an' no conshtituents to the fore whin I go back to me native land. Sorra a day is it but I get a letther askin for assisthance, or a free order on Molly Geoghegan—which, by the powers, I'd like to see the “bearer” presint till her at the bar in Rashkillen !

I say it was Father O'Swill, may the d—, —I mane may the saints—axin their pardon for me shlip ov the tongue—confound him, that took hould ov me an' compelled me to stand for Parliment for the anshunt borra ov Rashkillen, in the County Slayo ; by the same token the place where, whin Sir David McSwaney was standhin agen Captain Tranter, the English agent ov the Molloy esthates, the bhoys, havin adjourned the elecshun by carryin away the hustins an' drownin the offishuls in the black pool o' Slomore, there was what they called a parlimentary inquiry. I remember the thing well, for though I was only sixteen years ov age, I followed the crowd that did it, and saw the whole ov the prosadings at a disthance, though I regret to say I wasn't able to identifify any of the perpetraitors. Iver since that time till the last elecshun, by the blessin ov God an' the faithful oversight ov Father O'Swill, we've had quiet elecshuns, seein nobody venthured to stan but his nominees.

As bad luck would have it, immejitley afther Parliment met, our mamber, The O'Swagger—pace be to his soul—died from natheral causes ; his horse havin taken a ditch, an' a hedge, an' a nice bit ov stone wall, but findin a hape of stones beyant that agen, was unable to surmount all the obstacles, an' knocked O'Swagger's head with the little brains he had in it, poor fellow, into worse than smithereens. O'Swagger was a Home Ruler, an' regularly voted with siven other pathriots for the Repale ov the Union, an' a Parliment at College Green. He also took an active part in the Pope's brigade, which, Father O'Swill says, is the only Christhian body in the Houses ov Parliment—but I doubt if iver he has seen them on the spot. No sooner was poor O'Swagger undher the sod than the Rashkillenites began to quarrel over his grave—worse luck to me.

Mr. Rufus Delaney, who owned half the borra, an' the whole ov the adjacent mountain ov Drumcarn, with the esthate of that name, immejity isshued an address in the Protestant interest, declaring himself in favour ov the National system of eddicashun, an' agenst Home Rule. There wasn't a soul in the nabourhood, the O'Swagger bein dead, to oppose him, an' the reputashun ov the borra, afther the Slomore tragedy, was so hoigh, that no sstranger would venthur to put his nose in it, so there was ivery chance of Delaney bein returned without opposishun. Father O'Swill was in a d—— of a fury. He cursed Delaney from the althar in a way that made his own tinants thremble for his futur, let alone the time bein. He wrote to Dublin beggin the Amnesty Assoshiashun or the Home Rule Committee to sind down a jintleman an' a pathriat to contest the place on their own principles, but there wasn't wan ov them fool enough to come to the fore an' put his head or his feet in his grave, whatever the principle. Thin he wrote to London for an Englishman, known, from former exarience, that they were open to convieshun in cases like the prisen, an' niver rightly esthimated the dangers of Oirish society. But the place was too nothorius. Though he tried all the barristhers, even they would not risk a visit, "just to inspect it," as Father O'Swill had politely put the invitashun. 'Twas only wan day before the nominashun, when, as bad luck would have it, I was carryin in from the well a bucket or two ov pure wather, just to modhify the sthrength ov the potheen, which was too much above proof for any Christhian to dhrink it, who should come up but his riverence himself, an' says he—

"Barney," says he, "this is a bad business. Here's this thraitorous (he employed another word before that, but is it for me to be informing the Supreme powers ov the little wakenesses ov one ov their own sarvints?) here's this thraitorous land-scourge," says he, "puttin up for Parliment against me will, and to be returned to-morra forenoon, an' me for thirty years," says he, "the only man that iver venthured to nominate a candhidata for the borra of Rashkillen ! Faix," says he, "I'd loike to see the bhoy ov yes will nominate *him*," says he, "that's all. But," says he, "look here, Barney, since there's no wan else, we must nominate you, and you must go to St. Stavens and advicate Home Rule and Catholic eddicashun."

"Faith," says I, "it's little I know ov wan or the other ! For Molly's the wan that rules within thim four walls, as yer riverence doesn't nade to be towld, an' as for Cathilic eddicashun, yer riverence, I've had enuff ov that same in the usual way ov niver bein troubled with any."

"Nonsense," says he ; "I don't mane that. I'm spakin ov matters more sarious and importhant than yer quarrels with Molly Geoghegan an' the three R's. Just lave that to me. I'll put ye up

to what's required. Undherstan now, I'm going to propose ye to-morra to be returned to the House ov Commons, as mamber for Rashkillen, *vice* The O'Swagger, Esquire, desased—God help him!—an' it shall be at small expisne if ye'll take my advice. Ye're pretty well acquainted with all the bhoys about here; indade," says he, "for that matter they're all ov them better acquainted with yer shebeen than with the parish church,—'tis a wakeness of the warm Oirish nater:—but just send down an' ask as many as can spare the time to meet me here to-night, an' I'll talk to them about it. An', look here, Barney," says he, "it'll be a dhry business discussin the political situhuation, so, Barney," says he, with a wink, "see ye have as much hot wather ready as there are pots to hould it, in case I see me way to proposin yer health," says he. "An', manetime, I'll step in an' have an intherview with Molly, an' make *her* all right, for mebbe she'd be expressin her astonishment in a disedifyin manner if we did it without notis. An' see, Barney," says he, "mix me a jhourum in the big thumblar on the top shelf, at the right han side, where Molly always kapes it ready for me, an' bring it till me to the small parlour doore, for I'm thinkin I'll nade all me wits about me for the intherview."

So in he went, an' called Molly to the small parlour, an' I mixed him a comforthable jhourum an' just stuck it in at the doore, for I heard Molly a screechin an' goin on like a wild tiger, an' his riveness to the fore! but I saw his hand take in the toddy, an' heard no more till, about an hour afther, Father O'Swill shouted to me from the parlour doore.

"Barney," says he, "ye may mix me another glass," says he, "an' don't be so squamish with the crather, an' if ye have iver a lemon in the house," says he, "just put a shlip ov it in, for I'm thinkin I've a touch ov the bile. An' thin come in here," says he, "an' be inthroduced to Mistress Molly Geoghegan, that to-morra night will be Lady Geoghegan, wife of the Mamber for Rashkillen."

Faith, sure enough, whin I enthered with the thumblar, Molly threw herself on me neck, an' cried, an' whined, an' bid me God speed, an' afther wipin her eyes in her petticoat, she runs away to make preparashuns for the business of the evenin.

Didn't the bhoys turn up in the evenin, mighty thrue to time, that's all! Sure they were to the fore to the tune ov siveral huntherds, let alone frens an' acquaaintances, who happened to be voisitin them from the surroundhin districts. Faith, if they'd only been dhrinkin at their own expisne, it's meself would be glad to see them every day ov the wake in the same numbers, an' conshuming the same quantities.

Father O'Swill came down, an' first ov all he took some ov the lading inhabithants into the kitchen, an' held a consultashun with them. 'Twas about six thumblers ov me best undiluted he had before he could compleate his negoshiashuns, an' they were all aiquilly

liberal. The bhoys was all over the place, an' by the time his riverence was ready to addhress them, they was ready for anythin. He called me till him, an' says he :

"Barney," says he, in a loud whisper, "owin to the grate fatigue an' excitement, I'm as wake as a cat, an' me knees knockin together. Get Teddy Rourke," says he, "an' yerself, an' give me yer shupport while I addhress the electurs on their dewty to Mother Church and Ould Ireland."

Wid that, Teddy an' I seized him by the arms, an' got him up on his fate, an' twas wondherful how anxiety had taken his strength, an' we was about to lift him up on a table, arranged for the purpose, but, with a twinkle in his eyes, says he,

"No, Barney, none ov yer elevashuns ov the host for me in my presint enfabled state," says he. "I'm more for mother earth than skywards at this moment."

So he held up his han an instant, an' the bhoys crowded roun, an' gave him three Irish hurrahs, that was loud enough to shake Misther Delancy in his bed.

"Bhoys," says he, "an' fellow-electhurs. I'm too excited and indignant to say much till ye to-night, but what I do say shall be to the point. Yer aware that in consequence of the death ov me good frind, The O'Swagger—pace to his ashes, that lie in the graveyard of Rashkillen, an' to his sowl, too, wheriver it is," says he, "an' that's an exthremely doubtful an' delicate point—there's a vacancy in the representashun of this borra, an' ye'll be called upon to elect his successor to-morra ! (*Sensation.*) Now," says he, "ye're all cognisant ov the intherest I've always taken in securing ye a fit and proper person to reprent so respectable, an' intelligent, an' God-fearing a community (*cheers*), an' seein' I'm responsible for the sowls ov ivery wan ov ye—an' there's some ov ye, like Arthur Sullivan there, little disposed to pay the praste his lawful dues, an' aise the weight ov the burthen yer sinful sowls impose upon me—Bhoys, there's niver a wan ov ye can say but I always selected a man afther yer own heart. (*Thru for ye.*) Now," says he, "will ye believe it, bhoys, there's the elecshun comin' on to-morra, an' a candhidate before the constituency, an' niver a word asked ov me whether I approbated him or not ? Moreover, bhoys, ye know who he is, the land-scourge and tyrant ov the whole disthrit, a Sassenach an' a Protestant"—the bhoys was feroshus in their ejackilashuns—"the man," says he, "who places his iron heel on the neck of Ireland's sons, the heretic, the blasphemer of Holy Church, for he would deny her the right of eddicating her own children—a right I've maintained for ye this thirty years, and mane to vindicate, plaze God, to me dyin hour." The roars was tirrible, an' I thought if any ov Delancy's frinds was presint, 'twould be wise they'd be to advhise him to be absent from the Court House to-morra. "Now, bhoys," continues his riverence, who

at the same time was laning very heavily on Teddy and me, "I'm in favour ov civil an' religious liberty, which is the watchword ov the hierarchy, an' the suppresshun, by ivery manes in our power, ov Protestantism an' infidelity. Therefore," says he, "I'm determined this beggarly spaldeen shall never be mamber for Rashkillen, if he is returned to the House ov Commons in his grave. (*Cheers.*) An', in this emerjency, who'se the man, the only man, we can lay our hands on, to do justice to our principles an' represent us in the Parliment of the United Kingdom—before long, plaze God, it will be at College Green. (*Here there was great cheering.*) Who will advicate the cause ov Mother Church, an' Mother countrry, an' uphold, in the teeth of Sassenach oppressors, the cause ov civil an' religious liberthy? Who, but my friend, BARNEY GEOGHEGAN!"—he let go ov me arm to slap me on the back, an' 'twas well at the same moment Teddy held fast till him to kape himself steady, for he swung round like the arm of a crane. The bhoys hurrahd an' roared out for me, an' was too excited to notis his wakeness, so we deposited him on a chair, while Molly prepared him a dhrap to recover him, and I stood upon the table among great cheerin an' some amicable fightin in the background. Says I:

"Bhoys an' fellow electhurs. I'm glad to see ye all, an' hope ye've been hospitally resaved," says I. "I'm a man ov few words. I stan by all his riverence has said, an' more too. I'm prephared to represent ye, if required, to the best ov my ability, an' if ye return me to Parliment, I'll hope to see ye all here to-morra night undher the same circumstances."

Wid that they lifted me clane aff the table, an' carried me all roun the town at the imminent risk ov me life, for the excitement had made them all as wake as Father O'Swill himself, an' they was not particular which end ov me was uppermost.

They remained with me all night, to be ready for the rush into the court-house in the mornin. There niver was such a nominashun known in that part ov the countrry. Delancy an' his frinds was condhucted into the place by the conshtabulary, but no one knows how they was condhucted out agen, for the whole ov the inside of the court was gutted ov its contents and him among them, an' it was impossible to report the prosadings from the absence of power in any wan to see or know what they were. But 'twas generally understood that Delancy an' me was nominated. There was telegrams sent all over the distrikt for troops an' police, but there was sorra a want for wan ov them. D—— a man appeared to vote for Delancy through the whole day, an' I was unanimously returned by acclimashun.

The last thing I remimber was me thankin' the crowd out ov winda, wid Molly houldin me round the neck an' shriekin at me like a mad woman. Father O'Swill had been put to bed a couple ov hours before. The borra was full ov broken heads an' black eyes for several weeks,

but as they were all given an' taken in pure frindliness, the consequences was not as bad as they might have been had Delancy's frinds come to the fore.

Though the consumpshun ov whisky was ruinous, Molly was so proud ov the honour she'd resaved she said nothin about it, an' tied up my shirts an' breeches an' hose, an' the suit ov black his riverence recommended me to wear in the House ov Commons, and packed them all in a bran new portmantle, procured for the purpose.

Father O'Swill came over the day before I left for London to advise me about me behaviour.

"Barney, me bhoy," says he, "ye've been returned by a confidin countrhy till do yer dewty as a patriot an' a frind of liberty. The watchword ov the prastehood, as I towld the bhoys the other night, is CIVIL AN' RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, 'which manes,' says you when yer asked to explane it, 'the rights ov the church, the indipendence of the clargy, an' Home Rule for ould Ireland.' Now, Barney," says he, winkin at me over the thumblter he held in his hand, which by the same token was not empty at the time, "it's the sacret ov political succcess to concale yer rale objec' undther another, for dacency's sake, just as ye concale the outlines of yer limbs in yer breeches; an' ye undherstan, ye'll require, in daling with them Sassenach scoundrels in the House, to avoid yer ushual candhour of spache, which is remarkable, espeshully afther ye've had yer evenin potashuns; for I give ye fair warnin ye'll nade to be sittin up till all hours in St. Staven's, an' 'twill be many a glass ov yer favorite beverage ye'll require betwixt the hours ov ten an' three in the mornin to kape ye alive an' awake to yer duty. Now, undherstan me," says he, "ye'll stick to that wan tex an' no more, 'Civil an' Religious Liberty,' which says you is all that we ask for the prastehood an' people ov Ireland, an' it can only be secured to them by grantin denominashunal education in Irish schules, as you have already given it in English schules, a Roman Catholic university for the Irish Roman Catholic youth, an' Home Rule from College Green. If they ask ye for dethails, Barney, ye'll be betther just to say, that ye refer them for those to Cardinal Cullen an' Mister Martin, who has studied the subjeccs more intimitely than you could do. Moreover, Barney," says he, "it won't do to let the borra ov Rashkillen and me own existhence be overlooked, so you must give notis to the Spaker that 'at an airly day it is yer intenshun to call the attenshun ov the House to the subjecc ov the relashuns ov Ireland to Great Britain, an' to move resolushuns thereon,' an' I'll send ye the resolushuns. Will ye replate them words now till ye know them aff by heart?"

Whin I'd larned aff the words by rote to his satisfacshun, he says—

"I'll also send ye the spache when the time comes, an' ye'll deliver it to the House with appropriate gestures ov yer own. An' here's success to ye, me bhoy, an' success to yer eloquence. Faith, it's

mighty shallow this thumblar gets with drinkin' out ov it. I'll nade another ddrop by way ov doin' justice till that toast."

It's not necessary to mintion how I thravelled to London third-class, an' was obliged to knock down a porther at Dublin for insulting me dignity, an' refusin' to carry me portmantle, an' me a mimber ov Parliament. I came across wid a counthryman, who towld me the best Irish hotel was the Green Harp in Shoreditch, an' I engaged me room there at three shillins' a week, never lettin' on I was a legislator for fear they'd overcharge me. Father O'Swill promised me he would write to some frinds in the House till look afer me, an' recommended me to dhrive down there at three in the afthernoon. So I dhressed in my best linen shirt, an' me black suit an' hat, an' not knowin' the character ov the company I was goin' into, I carried me shillelagh undher me arm. I'd niver seen a "handsome" before, an' it seemed a deloshun ov spache, but as I was towld 'twas the quickest way ov travellin' I got into wan an' towld the dhriver to go till the House ov Commons. It seemed as far to that place as from Rash killen to Dublin, an' houses an' people an' vehicles all the way, but at last we came undher a great tower wid a clock in it ye might have seen twenty miles off, an' the jerry turned into a courtyard an' dhrew rein opposite two grate doores. At the same time he startled me by shoutin' down threw a hole in the roof—

"Ere's Westminster 'All, sir. Through them doors to the 'ouse of Commons," an' he began to laugh.

Whin I'd got out ov the trap, says I—

"There's a sixpence for ye, me lad, an' ye're a purty dhriver considherin' where ye sit in the vehicle."

He tossed it up in the air, an' says he—

"Look 'ee 'ere, guvnor, none o' your jokes—my fare's two shillin' an' sixpence." I knew he was tryin' to deceave me.

"Two shillin' an' sixpence, ye blaguard," says I, "an' you only dhrivin' me wan Irish mile. Is it takin' advanthalge ov a shtanger ye're tryin' on wid me? Sorra a fardin' more ye'll get from *me*," an' I turned to go in at the big doores, where two polishmen were standin' at ease. At that, the jerry came down from his cage behind the masheen, an' sazed me by the collar—it's what no man widin' twenty miles ov Rashkillen would venthur to do, an' me blood was up. So I twisted myself out ov his hand, an' with a whoop an' a whirl ov me shillelagh give him a crack on the head that sounded all over the place. He wint down like a rabbit, an' in a moment there was a grate commoshun. There was a bigger crowd in wan minute than ye could gather in county Slayo wid a week ov notis. The consthabulary came forward, but I swore if any wan ov them touched me I'd be the death ov him. Says I—

"I'm the mimber for Rashkillen, an' a shtanger to the counthry, an' the thavin' spaldeen was for takin' advantage ov me novel an'

unprotheeted condishun to charge me half-a-crown for a dhrike in that crazy masheen. If yer a peeler," says I to wan ov the polishmen, " take him up for assaultin a mimber ov parliment."

The crowd laughed ; an' indade the man wanted takin' up badly, for his head was bleedin.

" There's some mistake," says the peeler. " Get up, Charlie, if you're not too much hurt, and tell us what's it all about."

When he'd got it explained, he says to me respectfully—

" I'm afraid you're in the wrong, sir, but no doubt it's from your disacquaintance with London. If you'll take my advice, sir, you'll settle with the man, for he can have you up for the assault and give you a great deal of trouble, and it won't be pleasant for you, coming to the House for the first time."

After considerin the matther I took his advice, an' gave the man two pounds—an' me that has broken many an Irishman's head free of charge and been thanked for the honour ! * " Twas a quare countrry I'd come to. When it was arranged, the peeler says—

" I see ye're a new mimber, sir, an' not used to the ways of the metropolis. I'll show you the entrance to the House."

We went in at the doores, an' there was the biggest an' butifullest place that ever me eyes beheld, wid a roof an' stained windas like a church, an' images all along wan side, which the peeler towld me was the works of Ayrton, a celebrated sculpther. But it turned out to be a mistake, for he's now drinkin brandy-and-water beside me in the smoking-room, an' he's called the " Aydile ov the people," a name I don't understan, but it's clear it don't mane an idol, from what I know. The constable showed me through the side doore an' towld me to folla me nose up the lobby. I took his advice an' that brought me to a grate place full ov people standin about wid their hats on. " Sure," says I to meself, " this is the House ov Commons." But another polishman comes up to me an' says—

" Member, sir?"

" I am ; is this the House ?"

" No, sir, this is the lobby ; the entrance to the House is through that doorway."

I felt very quare at the sstrangeness ov the place, an' obsarvin there was glasses an' bottles on a counter at wan side ov the house, I stepped up an' called for a dhrop ov the crater.

" Ov the *what*, sir ?" says the man.

" The crater," says I.

" Och," says he, " what part do ye come from ?"

" Rashkillen," says I.

" Yer Mr. Barney Geoghegan," says he.

" Yer right," says I.

* Mr. Barney shares a common surprise with Dodd *père* in the matter of responsibility for broken heads.

"Thin welcome to the house, sir," says he. "I read ov your successess with rapther. I'm Tully O'More's nevvy," says he. "Will ye take it nate or hot?"

"I'll thry it nate first," says I.

So we dhrank to the good of Ould Ireland, an' says Tully O'More's nevvy, "Ye might dhrink up all the whiskey we have in London to that same toast in this place, an' sure it'll projuce no effect on the hard-hearted Sassenachs."

"Well," says I, takin a second reviver, "I'm about to give a notis that will shake the cowards in their shues." Wid that says I "Where's the house?" an' puttin me hat on wan side ov me head and me shillelagh undher me arm, I sauntered up to the doore the polishman had shown me. There was two little spalpeens in clerical dress sittin on both sides in two things like large coal-scuttles turned up on ind. Wan ov them jumps up an' says—

"Where are you going, sir?"

"Intil the House ov Commons," says I.

"You can't go in, sir. Only members are admitted," says he.

"I'm a mamber," says I.

They both laughed, an' says the other—

"Come, sir, we can't let you stop the way. Stand aside if you please, or I'll hand you over to the police. You must be drunk."

On that word I stepped back two paces, an' with a whirra an' a shout, I sazed me shillelagh, which was in me han' at the time, an' I screeched out—

"I'm the mamber for Rashkillen to the House ov Commons ov the United Kingdom ov Grate Britan an' Ireland. I'm for Civil and Religious Liberty, Home Rule, an' Denominashunal Educashun; an' by the powers, if you two little skulking blaguards don't get out ov the doore an' let me intil the house I'll brake ivery bone ov yer bodies."

Iv'ry wan in the lobby turned round an' shouted "Silence!"—it's more partikler they are about silence outside than they are inside the house—and three peelers came forward. There was about to be a genral shindy, for Tully O'More's nevvy stood to me with a soda-wather bottle, when a pleasant-looking jintleman stepped up to me an' said, "Are you Mr. Barney Geoghegan, the new mamber for Rashkillen?"

"Thrue for ye," said I, "I'm the very man. An' me refused entrance to the very place I was sent to by me constituents."

"Oh! it's all right," says he, winkin to the constables. "I've heard ov you from Father O'Swill. I'm a counthryman ov yer own—"

"I'd know it by yer spache," says I—

"An though I'm not ov yer way ov thinkin, I'll take ye in an inthroujue ye, an' put ye up till the ways ov the house."

"Would ye mind givin me yer name?" says I.

"Maguire," says he.

"What!" says I; "the pathriot ov Cork?"

"The same," says he.

"Well," says I, "yer well known to be the gratest man in the House ov Commons, an' the lader ov the pathriotic party; and I'm proud ov yer acquaintance, Mister Maguire. Will ye join me in a dhrap for the sake ov ould Ireland?"

It's about the worst whiskey that iver I tasted they sell at the counther. It's too near the officers of excise to be a natheral element. Says I when we'd colloqued,

"I'm goin' to give notis ov a moshun in favour of Home Rule, an' if ye'll show me the Spaker it's till 'im his riverence towld me to addhress meself."

"All right," says Mister Maguire, wid a twinkle in his eye; "but ye must first ov all take the oaths an' yer sate, an' for that purpose I'll get Sir Kilmoy O'Clocker to accompany ye to the table. They're at prayers now," says he.

Then he inthroduced me to Sir Kilmoy, an' when prayers was over they took me till the bar ov the House as they called it, but sorra a gill ov spirits is iver to be found there as I have larned to me disgust. The House was lit widout lamps and was crowded wid jintlemen all wearin their hats, an' not a faymale to be seen. There was an ould jintleman wid a wig on, sittin directly opposite the doore in a sate wid a grate thing like an umbrella over it; an' two other jintlemen in the same costume at a thable in front ov him; an' before the thable a grate goulden mace in a gun-rack ov the same metal.

Whin the ceremony was complated, Mister Maguire whispered in me ear, "Ye'll now follow me to a sate, an' whin ye sit down put yer hat on."

I sat down next him on a sate which was butifuly cushioned an' as soft as the moss on Drumearn, an' thin as directhed I put on me hat. There was a buzz of conversashun in the House at the time an' some laughin. Thinks I, if they're laughin' at *me*, they're mighty misthaken, an' I'll give them a touch of Irish assurance, so I stood up an' said loud enough to be heard all over the place—

"Mister Spaker!"—but the words was not well out ov me mouth whin the whole company roared at me like a herd ov mad bulls—

"Ordher! ordher!"

The Spaker too stood up.

Says I, "Ye cowardly spalpeens—" but they drowned me remarks inthirely by shoutin' "Ordher, ordher! Chair, chair!" I began to get angry, for thinks I to meself, this is a thrick ov the Sassenach blaguards to shut me mouth, they well knowin what I'm about to say. I gave a flourish ov me shillelagh an' shouted at the top ov me voice—

"Is it ordher ye want," says I, "for I'll soon interjuice it to ye!" but again the whole place was filled with shoutins to that extint you couldn't hear yer own words. "Ordher, ordher! Chair, chair!"

Me frind at me side sazed me coat-tails, an' pulled me down on the sate, an' afther possessin himself ov me shillelagh, which I was about to bring down on the head ov a jintleman who was shoutin "Chair, chair!" and who had mighty little hair for the size ov his brains, named the member for Waterford, says to me—

"Kape still, I tell ye. Ye've made a misthake. Ye must always on risin to addhress the Spaker take off yer hat. Ye'll have to apologise."

The Spaker said in a slow, clear voice—

"I must inform the Honourable Member that he is not in order in addressing the chair with his hat on; and I hope he will not consider it one of his duties as a representative to bring a shillelagh into this House and emphasise his remarks with flourishes not strictly rhetorical."

At that there was a roar of laughter, an' bein willin to adhere to the ways ov the place, I took off me hat an' got up again on me legs, an' says I—

"Mister Spaker, I axe yer pardin, but I'm unbeknownst to the rules ov the House. I hereby give notis that at an airy day I shall call the attenshun ov the House to the subjec ov the relashuns ov Ireland to Grate Brittan an' move resolushuns thereon." Ye see I'd got it as pat as could be from Father O'Swill.

The laughter was ten times worse than before, an' the little Spaker nearly rowled off the chair. I was beginnin to feel for me shillelagh, whin up jumps a man right forenenst the Spaker, an' standin' at the table, looks roun the house, wid his eyes very angry and very wild, an' says he, pointin at me with his right ear—

"And I beg to give notice on behalf of the Government that if that motion is brought forward by the Honourable Gentleman, the Government will consider it its duty to treat it as one involving a question of confidence in the Ministry" (here there was loud cries of "Oh! oh!"). "Yes, I repeat it, as involving confidence in the Ministry, and we shall be governed by the result accordingly."

Mister Maguire explained to me that the jintleman was in the habit ov givin these notices afther any moshun he didn't like, an' 'twas a sign ov the importance attached to me weight an' standin' to have me proposal made a critical question. So afther doin me duty, I went out to exchange congratulashuns wid Tully O'More's nevvy, who, betwane you an me is the only honest pathriat, barrin meself, in the Parliament Houses.

CLÉMENCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PATTY."

I.

THE old Court-yard of the "Ours d'Or" is full of warm light, but it is not glowing August sunshine.

The tall fuchsias in green tubs which border the court are scarcely in leaf; there are no blossom-buds on the myrtles, though they have put out bright tender little leaves of expectation; the fountain sparkles, but the fish are not gambolling in the basin below—they are still housed safely in the glass globe in Clémence's parlour.

The sun disports himself chiefly among the gueldres roses and lilacs, which atone just now for the shabby brown show they will make in autumn, by a perfect luxury of blossoms; snowy masses with exquisite green and grey shadows in between; lilac flowers, now rich, now delicate—always exquisite, both in hue and fragrance.

It is almost May, and yet the keen March wind lingers so as to keep Eulalie the cook—there is no male *chef* at this old Flemish inn—mindful of her rheumatism, and unwilling to venture out of the warm shelter of her kitchen.

Eulalie is a small spare woman, with a clever face and dark eyes; these are full of vexation as she stands beside a small table on one side of the kitchen, and strips the leaves from crisp young lettuce-plants.

"It is insupportable," she grumbles, as she drops each leaf deftly into the shining brass pan of water at her feet. "Mam'selle Clémence goes beyond reason; if her sister, Madame Scherer, were to ask for the gown off Mam'selle's back she would send it her. She gave Madame Scherer a husband, though it almost broke her heart, and that is enough—too much; it is folly to go on pouring wine into a full bottle."

Eulalie shrugs her shoulders and shreds off the lettuce-leaves faster than ever; she has a clever head and a warm heart, but her temper needs a safety-valve. Some time ago it had found this, when Madame de Vos—the mother of the landlord of the "Ours d'Or"—came self-invited to manage her son's household.

Eulalie disliked the fat pink-faced dame from the beginning, first for the petty vexations which Madame de Vos had inflicted on her son's wife, Eulalie's own dear mistress, but chiefly for the unceremonious

way in which she had installed herself at the "Ours d'Or" after her daughter-in-law's death.

Eulalie had put on her war-paint at that time, and had felt compelled to keep her fighting weapons sharp and bright, and to say truth this process was in some way congenial to the skilful old woman.

At that time had happened the great sorrow of Clémence de Vos. Her betrothed lover, Louis Scherer, had returned at the appointed time to claim her as his wife ; but Clémence was absent, and the extreme beauty of her young sister Rosalie, and, as Eulalie always persisted in affirming, the manœuvres of Madame de Vos, so infatuated the young soldier, that Clémence voluntarily released him from his troth-plight, and he and Rosalie were married.

But Clémence's father had been unable to forgive the wound inflicted on his beloved child, and, on Rosalie's wedding-day, madame her grandmother went back to live in her own house at Louvain.

"Dame ! what a happiness ! what a relief !" Eulalie had said. "Mam'selle Clémence will now take the place that should always have been hers ; and what an angel is Mam'selle Clémence ! "

It may be that the principle which urged the cook at the "Ours d'Or" so constantly to brighten the shining brass pots and pans on her kitchen-wall was thorough, and led her also to fear lest her tongue too might grow dull and rusty unless she sometimes sharpened it against her master Auguste de Vos, and even against the "angel" Mam'selle Clémence.

There is a slight sound, and Eulalie looks up.

A black-cloaked figure stands at the parlour door on the opposite side of the long, paved, arched-over entrance to the courtyard of the "Ours d'Or."

Eulalie comes forward to the door of her kitchen, which is on the opposite side of the paved entrance way.

"Mam'selle Clémence," she says, shrilly.

"Yes, yes, Eulalie, I am coming :" the voice is so sweet that one is impatient to see the face which goes with it, but Clémence has turned back to listen to her father's last words.

Auguste de Vos is a stout, florid Belgian, but he has dark hair and an intelligent face. He looks younger, and happier too, since he has been left to live alone with Clémence ; he has the same blessed freedom from domestic worry that he enjoyed while his wife lived. Clémence has a dexterous way of keeping the bright side of life turned towards her father ; even Eulalie's querulousness rarely reaches him. Auguste de Vos has never been a demonstrative man ; but ever since the evening when Rosalie's marriage was decided, there has been a graver tenderness in his manner to his eldest daughter, a something not to be painted in words, but which often kindles in Clémence that strange emotion which brings a sob and a smile together.

"Well, my child," Auguste de Vos is saying, "if thou sayest it is

needful, I yield; but remember always that Rosalie⁹ has three maids and only two children: it is to me inconceivable that after all her grandmother has done for her, and for Louis Scherer too, they should not contrive to nurse my mother in her sickness without thy help."

Clémence smiles: she has a sweet, pensive face, but her dark eyes light up at this smile, and sparkle brightly through the long black lashes.

"Poor Rosalie! Thou art severe, my father; but it is almost the first request she has made me since her marriage, and it seems a beginning, and——" here Clémence falters and blushes, and then looks frankly into her father's eyes—he is father and mother both to her now—"only thou knowest well Rosalie has never been the same to me since she went away."

Her father's eyes are full of wistful tenderness.

"The fault is none of thy making, Clémence."

"I must go to Eulalie :" she nods and leaves him. "Poor Rosalie," she says to herself, "she is not yet forgiven."

"Hein," Eulalie puts her head on one side like a pugnacious sparrow as Clémence steps into the kitchen, "fine doings, indeed; and it is true then, Mam'selle, that you go to-morrow to Bruges to nurse the bonne-maman who never was once good to you ?"

"Hush, Eulalie, you may not so speak of my grandmother," Clémence's grey eyes look almost severe.

Eulalie turns to the table behind her.

"I speak as I find, Mam'selle. Duty is duty everywhere; and to me, Mam'selle, Monsieur is of more value than Madame his mother, and he will be sad without you; and she—well she would have perhaps a little neglect, what will you? Madame Scherer is young, and she loves her ease; but she will be obliged to take care of Madame de Vos, if you do not go, Mam'selle Clémence."

"Nevertheless I am going." Clémence speaks decidedly, and her bright smile quiets Eulalie. "Now I want some broth, a cold chicken, if you can spare me one, and some eggs. I am going to see your friend, the wife of the sacristan of St. Michel."

Eulalie grunts, but she produces the food demanded, and carefully stows it away in a basket.

"It is all very well," she says; "I don't grudge the food and drink which Mam'selle gives, but I ask myself, when Mam'selle Clémence marries and goes away—and she will marry some day, I suppose—ah! but the man will be lucky!—what will then happen to the wife of the sacristan and all the other sick folk of our parish? She has used them to these dainties; *ma foi!* it will be harder to give them up altogether than to go without them now."

Louis Scherer left the army on his marriage; he has an appointment at Bruges, and Rosalie found housekeeping so little to her

liking, that after the first few months she persuaded her husband to let Madame de Vos live with them.

For a time this arrangement had been successful. Madame doated on the young couple, managed the servants, and contributed liberally to household expenses ; but when babies came—two with only a year's interval between—strife arose about their management, and the discord in his household disgusted Louis Scherer.

It was at his instigation that Rosalie had now written to ask Clémence to come and help to nurse Madame de Vos in her sickness.

II.

LOUIS met his wife's sister at the railway station. Clémence had not seen him for more than a year : she thought he looked aged ; his fair, handsome face was full of worry.

They had met since the marriage, and all remembrance of the old relations had been effaced by the new, save it may be a certain self-complacency in the man in the society of the woman who had once so dearly loved him, and in the woman a certain blindness to faults which were visible to all other eyes ; but then Clémence de Vos was indulgent to everyone—to every one but herself.

She asked after all the family, and then,

“ How is the Sœur Marie ? ” she asked. “ Does Rosalie see her often ? ”

“ Ma foi,”—Louis twirled his pretty, soft moustaches : he was really handsome, though he looked too well aware of the fact,—“ Rosalie may, and she may not, see your aunt, the Sœur Marie ; but she does not tell me. I have no special liking for religieuses, especially when they are no longer young or pretty ; but here we are, Clémence, and there is your little god-daughter peeping out of window.”

They had come up a by-street, which ended on the quay of one of the canals, bordered on this side by a closely planted line of poplar-trees. The newly opened leaves trembled in the warm sunshine reflected from the red, high-gabled houses over the water—houses which went straight down to the canal edge, and seemed to bend forward so as to get a view of their own full-length reflections in the yellow water. Behind the houses rose the graceful tourelles of the Hôtel de Ville, and beyond, rising high above all the rest, was the beffroi. It was just three o'clock, and suddenly the carillon sounded out from the lofty tower, swelling, with sweet throbs, through the air above them, as if the angels were holding a musical festival in those melodious, unearthly strains.

But Louis was too much used to the carillon to notice it. “ There is your god-daughter, Clémence,” he said,

Clémence started from her rapt listening. It had seemed to her she heard her mother's voice up there among the angels.

Louis Scherer lived in a red stepped-gabled house. There was a pointed window in the gable, with an arched hood of grey stone: the window-mullions too were of stone. Below were two similar windows, with a carved spandril between the arches; and at one of these lower windows peeped out a little smiling cherub-face—a miniature, Clémence thought, of Rosalie.

Clémence kissed both hands to the little maid, and then went in through the open archway below the windows.

There was a patter of little feet, a chirrup of slight treble voices, and then two laughing baby faces peeped from behind a green, half-closed door on the left of the paved entrance.

Clémence forgot where she was, forgot even the bonne-maman's illness, and sat down on the door-step, with the two blooming darlings nestling in her arms.

The younger of the two, the little Clémence, talked glibly in her soft, incoherent gibberish; but little Louis played for a while at being shy, alternately hiding his face in his aunt's black cloak, or else looking up with round, shining blue eyes, and his pink, fat forefinger between his pouting lips.

Louis had passed on into the house to fetch his wife.

"Tiens, tiens!" Rosalie's voice sounded so shrill, that Clémence put the children off her lap, and jumped up from her low seat.

The sisters kissed each other affectionately, and then they exchanged looks.

"Ma foi," Rosalie said to herself, "Clémence grows younger-looking every time I see her."

"Rosalie looks troubled;" and Clémence followed her sister upstairs, stifling a wish that she would look more sweet and simple. She was still a beautiful blonde; but the Rosalie of Clémence's youth had been lovelier in her simplicity than the befrizzled, over-dressed lady, whose smile was so forced and rare. In the short minute that followed their greeting Clémence had seen Loulou shrink away from his mother, and cling to his father's knees.

Madame de Vos's bedroom was at the end of the upstairs gallery. The walls were white, and so were the bed-hangings, with their white-tufted fringe. The cushion in the window-seat was covered in white dimity; the window itself was shrouded in white curtains, fringed like the bed-hangings. All this white seemed to bring out in yet stronger relief the deeply tinted pink face of Madame de Vos. She stretched one hand out to greet Clémence; the other lay still on the coverlet, powerless for evermore.

"Eh bien, my child, thou art come at last, then, to look at what is left of thy grandmother. Ah! but, Clémence, is it not incredible that I, so active, and of so perfect a constitution, should be lying

here like a silly old woman, and la mère Borot, that old imbecile, who has at least ten more years than I have, ails nothing? Ma foi, I cannot understand how this is."

Clémence kissed the fretful face, and then seated herself at the bedside.

"Thou canst stay a few minutes, Clémence," Rosalie nodded, "but not longer. I have much to say to thee."

Madame de Vos looked angry.

"Rosalie, thou art so selfish. Thou hast Louis and the children; leave Clémence to me: I have no one."

She closed her eyes with a weary sigh. Rosalie made an expressive grimace at her sister, and crept out of the room. Clémence sighed too. At home she and her father lived in such unbroken harmony, this discord seemed doubly jarring. This was only her second visit to Bruges, and when Rosalie had paid short visits to the "Ours d'Or" she had been gay and bright. But her grandmother soon claimed Clémence's attention. Madame de Vos began with her own sufferings, and then went on to the neglect, the vanity, the bad temper of Rosalie.

"And, Clémence, she is also jealous. She will not let thee stay long with me, lest thou shouldst love me best. It is the same with the little ones: they love the bonne-maman, poor darlings; and so they may not run to the end of the gallery—and I who have done everything for her."

As soon as she could get the words in, Clémence interrupted,—

"Does la tante come to see thee—the Sœur Marie?"

"No; no one remembers me now. I am helpless, and suffering, and forgotten. I had plenty of friends, as thou knowest, when I had a house of my own, and did not spend my money on ungrateful children. The Sœur Marie, why should she come? Rosalie told me that Louis disliked to see her, and so I told my poor Marie to keep away; and, Clémence, it is true that Marie is not an amusing companion."

It was such a new pleasure for the invalid to get so sweet and cheerful a listener, that she would scarcely let Clémence go when she was summoned to supper.

Sounds of angry voices came from the eating-room. Clémence opened the door, and met Louis just coming out. He had his hat in his hand, and his face was flushed.

"Bon soir, my sister," he said. "You and Rosalie may have all the talk to yourselves."

He passed out, and Clémence looked at her sister. Rosalie's face was heated and angry. She sat in sullen silence, and gave Clémence her supper without any remark.

"I find bonne-maman better than I thought to find her. The attack does not seem to affect her speech."

Rosalie shrugged her shoulders.

"Thou mayest well say that." She tossed her befrizzed head. "Very surely she has been telling thee fine tales about me and my doings. Ah ! I know,"—she disregarded Clémence's attempt to stop her—"it is always I who do all the wrong. Others may do as they choose ; but they are always right with bonne-maman."

Clémence's heart ached : it seemed as if there was no union in this household. A tender, motherly longing to comfort her young sister urged her to speak.

"But how is it, Rosalie?—thou wast always the one she loved best. When people are ill, dearest, they get fractious, and find fault with those they prefer."

Rosalie shook her head.

"It is useless to talk about it, Clémence. It did not begin with this illness : the bonne-maman is unjust and selfish, and I do not wish to talk about her."

It seemed to Clémence that it was not easy to talk about anything to Rosalie. She would not speak either of her husband or her children. The only subject in which she seemed interested was a new toilette—a dress and bonnet she had been choosing for the fête to be held next week in the Jardin Botanique.

"Thou wilt like it, Clémence. There will be music, and the officers will all be there." It seemed to Clémence that Rosalie blushed.

"But I shall not go. The bonne-maman is quite helpless, though she can talk, and I do not think she ought to be left till she is better."

"As thou wilt." Rosalie's sullen look came back, and it seemed best to leave her to herself.

III.

THE fête in the Jardin Botanique begins at two o'clock. There is just time to hurry over the children's meal, and for Rosalie to make a fresh toilette when she comes in from mass.

She is in a flutter of anxiety when she comes downstairs. Clémence has not seen her sister look so bright since her arrival at Bruges.

"Come, Loulou, make haste." Rosalie speaks cheerfully, without the fretful ring to which Clémence has grown accustomed. "We shall be late, if thou dost not hasten." She goes to the window. It seems a matter of course that Clémence should sit between the two children, giving them their dinner.

"Oh ! what lovely weather!"—there is all the glee of a child in Rosalie's voice—"and I was so afraid it would be cold."

The door opened, and her husband came in. He was evidently struck by her improved looks.

"Are we not gay in our new bonnet?" he said, to Clémence. "I am just in time, Rosalie, to escort thee to the Jardin Botanique."

"Thanks"—Clémence started at the changed voice, and she saw the smile fade away—"I have no wish to be troublesome, Louis. I am sure thou couldst find a more amusing companion; and I have to take care of Loulou and little Clémence."

"As it pleases thee; but I suppose we may as well start together."

Louis spoke carelessly; but it seemed to Clémence that he was wounded. He stood whistling, with his hands in his pockets, while the children were got ready.

Clémence sighed when they had all gone away. It had been sad enough to see the disunion between Rosalie and her grandmother; but this was worse. Was Louis really an unkind husband, and was this the secret of the change in Rosalie? But her grandmother's bell rang loudly, and she was soon by the invalid's bed, listening to the reiteration of all her sufferings, the wealth and importance of the family Van Rooms, and the devotion evinced by Madame de Vos to her grandchildren.

"I am glad the day is so fine," said Clémence.

Madame de Vos grunted and turned away with a discontented look on her pink face.

"Thou art glad for Rosalie to play peacock. Ah, Clémence, if thou wert married to Louis, would it be necessary for thee to chatter to all the officers in the town?"

Clémence gave a little start, but she began to talk of something else; she would not believe evil of Rosalie.

Louis came home long before Rosalie did; he brought Loulou with him. Clémence found the little boy in his nursery, crying.

"Papa has sent me away from him," he sobbed; "and maman has called me a naughty boy, and I am not naughty, my aunt."

Clémence always stole some minutes every day from the invalid, to play with the children; but to-day she stayed in the nursery longer than usual. It was a large room at the top of the house: no fear that noise could reach mother or grandmother. Clémence romped and laughed till she was fairly tired; she loved Loulou dearly, he was so caressing and affectionate.

"Thou art a good fairy, my aunt," the child said, as he came downstairs with her to the door of his great-grandmother's room. "It is always bright in the house now thou art here; I am never triste."

He hugged her so tightly that Clémence's face was hidden in his curls.

At the moment Rosalie appeared at the other end of the passage; she looked flushed and angry, and she passed on into her room without a word.

When Clémence went downstairs to supper, she found Louis alone.

"I am not going out this evening," he said. "We need not wait supper for Rosalie; she has gone to bed."

"What is it?" Clémence asked herself. "There is a constrained atmosphere in this house. I dare not ask a question, lest I should do mischief or make a quarrel. Are Louis and Rosalie really miserable, or is it only before others that they speak so coldly?"

Marriage was different from what Clémence had pictured it; and yet when she thought of her father and mother, she felt that there must be something amiss between Louis and Rosalie.

Next morning, at breakfast-time, Loulou sat close to his mother.

"The aunt Clémence is a good fairy," he said; "if I am crying, she makes me happy again: she is like sunshine; the room is dark and sad when she goes out of it. Maman, get some sunshine from our aunt Clémence."

Rosalie was pouring out coffee; her hand shook, and the table-cloth was spoiled.

She turned a crimson face on Loulou, and boxed his ears.

"Go upstairs, naughty chatterbox: see the mischief thou hast done."

Louis Scherer looked up from his newspaper. Generally he ate his breakfast without making a remark of any kind; but Loulou was his special darling.

"Thou art unjust," he said to his wife: "it was not Loulou who upset the coffee."

Rosalie's eyes flashed.

"No; of course it is always I who am to blame—I who am wrong with every one."

She got up, and left the breakfast-table. Louis muttered an exclamation, and then he smiled at Clémence.

"Will you pour out coffee, or shall I?" he said.

Clémence felt miserable.

"Go after her," she said in a low voice.

Louis raised his eyebrows.

"You are not used to Rosalie: it is necessary to her to be jealous. It is you and the children to-day; it will be some one else to-morrow. It is better to leave her alone."

"And yet," Clémence thought as she sat afterwards in her grandmother's room, "what can this leaving alone come to? Must not each of these little jars weaken love? And how they loved each other once; ah, if I could only see them happy again!"

She heard a rustling at the door; opening it gently, she saw little Louis sobbing, curled up on the passage floor.

Clémence held out her hand, but the child shrank away.

"What is it, darling?" She went after him, and caught him up in her arms.

"It is thy fault, not mine now." A look of infinite relief came into the little troubled face. "Maman says I am naughty to love thee so much; and now it is thou who lovest me, Aunt Clémence;" but he twined his arms round her neck, "I do love thee best in the world."

Aunt Clémence was glad to hide her eyes among his golden curls. She was shocked, frightened even, that Rosalie could thus teach her child evil ; and yet, what could she do ? If she spoke to Rosalie, it might perhaps bring open discord between them.

She stood hugging the child in her arms, and Rosalie's door opened.

Clémence felt guilty before her sister's frowning face, only for an instant, then she set little Loulou down.

"Run upstairs," she said quietly ; "go and play with the little one."

The boy looked from one face to the other, and hesitated.

"Go, Loulou," said Clémence ; and he bounded upstairs.

"Why dost thou send him away, Clémence ? When I asked thee to come and nurse our grandmother, it was not that thou mightest rule my children and my house."

Clémence opened her bed-room door.

"Come in here," she said. Rosalie had spoken in a high, constrained voice, and one of the servants was crossing the end of the gallery.

Rosalie followed her sister, but she went on speaking.

"I care not who hears me : I have done no wrong this time. No mother can submit quietly to be robbed of the love of her children."

"Listen to me." Clémence spoke firmly. "Rosalie, thou art not happy, and thy vexation makes thee unjust to all. Children always like new faces ; if I were here always, Loulou would not care for me ; and it is the same with bonne-maman. Why, Rosalie," Clémence's eyes were full of tender sweetness—she smiled into the fair sulky face, "thou knowest thou wast always the pet and the favourite ? no one could ever help loving thee. Jealousy should never trouble thee."

Rosalie's eyes flamed with anger.

"Thou art as unjust as Louis is. I am not jealous, I am not vain; but surely when I find every one preferred, when husband and children too desert me, it is time that I should feel it. I am not insensible, Clémence. Cold, correct people do not know how warm hearts suffer." Tears sprang to her angry eyes, but she wiped them away. "It is useless for one to try to teach another."

Clémence put her arm round her sister, and kissed the flushed unwilling cheek.

"I did not mean that thou hadst not sorrows, dearest ; only thou must not brood over them. Vexations are like eggs : if we leave them to grow cold, they will perish out of existence ; but if we nurse them, they will gain strength and life. Why not go and romp with the children now !—it would do thee good."

Rosalie drew herself proudly away.

"Single women talk of what they cannot understand," she said bitterly. "I suppose I shall get a lecture next on behaviour towards

Louis : I am thankful all the same ;" she curtseyed profoundly, and then swept haughtily on to the door ; " but, Clémence, when I want advice about my behaviour, I will ask for it."

IV.

MONSIEUR DE VOS is pacing slowly up and down the courtyard of the "Ours d'Or," his head droops forward, his hands are clasped behind him ; between them he holds an open letter. He has been walking up and down in perplexed silence for at least ten minutes—silence unbroken except by the vociferations of Clémence's canary-bird from his green and gold cage in one of the arbours.

The silence, however, is not solitary. Eulalie stands at her kitchen door. The wind has a keen easterly twang in it, but Eulalie has forgotten her rheumatism ; she stands with her left hand clasping her waist, and the fingers of the right hand pressed against her lips, as if to keep in words.

For, though she has been dumb, her face is full of defiance. She has burst forth once in vehement disapproval, and has been bid to hold her peace ; but the remainder of her objections are on her tongue with a sure purpose of being spoken.

The letter between her master's fingers is from Clémence ; it tells in simple words that Madame de Vos is better, but that she needs change of air and scene, and that Clémence wishes to bring her grandmother home to the "Ours d'Or."

In his heart Monsieur de Vos feels the truth of his old servant's words, that Madame de Vos has always ill treated Clémence, and that there will be strife if she comes back ; but Auguste de Vos is too dutiful to permit Eulalie's tongue this licence, and he has told her sternly to mind her own business.

"It is my business," muttered the cook ; "but it ought to be yours."

He stops at last in his walk, and comes up to Eulalie.

"They will be here to-morrow," he says : "you had better see that their rooms are ready."

"Monsieur," Eulalie's face looks as wooden as one of the painted figures in the courtyard, "I love you and Mam'selle, but I cannot obey a new mistress ; you must then engage a new cook for the 'Ours d'Or.'"

"Eulalie," the master's face is as set as the maid's, "you are good, but you are also imbecile. Do you not know that you could not live away from Mam'selle Clémence ? do you not know also that any other soup than yours would give me indigestion ? There, it is ended ; I will not hear another syllable."

Monsieur de Vos probably thinks it best not to trust to his cook's self-control, for he walks quickly up the arched entrance-way, and stands looking out over the little Place.

Clémence does not complain in her letter to her father, and yet the tone of it troubles him. Like many another silent man, seemingly self-absorbed and indifferent, Auguste de Vos is keenly sensitive to the joys and sorrows of those he loves ; his sympathy with Clémence is so perfect, that he knows already that her visit to Bruges has been unhappy, but he is not going to question her.

"She will tell me what I ought to know," he said. "Clémence is good ; but she has a gift that is rarer among women than goodness—she knows when to speak, and when to be silent."

But when she came, though Clémence was silent, Monsieur de Vos was soon informed of the disunion in the Scherer household.

Madame de Vos had not recovered the use of her left hand ; but she was no longer bedridden, and her tongue wagged quite as freely as ever.

She told her son that she was quite sure Rosalie's ill-temper and jealousy had driven Clémence away from Bruges.

Monsieur de Vos felt indignant ; that his good patient child, after all she had suffered, should be ill treated by any one, was hard to bear ; but unkindness from Rosalie, for whom Clémence had given up the happiness of her young life, seemed to the tender father the highest pitch of ingratitude.

"And Louis, my mother, how does he behave ?"

"I have no quarrel with Louis ; he is perhaps not at home so much as he used to be, but what will you, Auguste ? If a woman is jealous and finds fault, you cannot expect a man to be always patient."

"When people love each other so foolishly, that it is necessary to set others aside that just these two may marry, ma mère—it seems to me,"—here Monsieur de Vos became conscious of his frowning brows and irate voice, and smoothed himself into a more dutiful aspect,— "it seems to me that such a pair should be more than usually loving and happy. But it is true in this as in other things, ill-gotten goods never prosper."

Madame de Vos put her handkerchief to her small round eyes. She was not crying ; but it seemed to her that her son's words were personal, and it behoved her to resent them.

"You forget that I approved of the marriage, Auguste, and it is impossible with my experience that I could mistake. Louis was much more suited to Rosalie than to Clémence."

"I agree with you ;" and this ended the discussion, but not the anger of Monsieur de Vos.

MEANTIME at Bruges the sad discord had increased. Till her illness, Madame de Vos had taken all housekeeping matters off Rosalie's hands ; and now that she had no one even to consult, the

young wife found her task too irksome. Her sharp temper made her servants dissatisfied and unwilling, and Louis Scherer complained bitterly of the discomfort of his home.

"If you stayed in-doors, Rosalie, and minded the house and the children, instead of parading like a peacock on the Kauter, chattering to popinjays, one might get a dinner or a supper one could eat."

At this Rosalie flew out in rebellion. "She had been brought up to be waited on. She had never done servants' work, and she was not going to begin."

"And about the Kauter," she said, passionately, "it is too bad. I may speak to Captain Delabre, or I may not; but I go to the Kauter to hear the band play, not to seek him. It is quite different from you, who go out every evening to talk to Eugénie Legros."

Louis shrugged his shoulders.

"Ma foi," he said, wearily, "I am growing tired of this, Rosalie. You are always angry when I go to see Legros; but it has never occurred to me, when I go to smoke a pipe with him, that I might also talk to his daughter. As you suggest it, I will try perhaps. Au revoir. I advise you to cultivate good temper."

But Louis Scherer did not go as usual to see his old friend. Rosalie's temper had never struck him so unfavourably as it did to-night. She had grumbled incessantly, but she had never spoken so openly. Rosalie had parted angrily from her sister, and had told Clémence that it was her visit that had stirred up strife; and though this was not true in the sense in which the poor jealous girl meant it, it was true that Louis had become more aware of his wife's ungentleness by means of the contrast she offered to Clémence. She had grown into a way of upbraiding her husband for everything he did, and yet she felt aggrieved by his want of tenderness. Louis Scherer, on this evening, did not even give himself the enjoyment of his pipe. He was deeply, thoroughly unhappy.

"And women's tempers do not improve with age," he thought. "Who could have guessed a sweet, blooming girl like Rosalie could change into such fretfulness?"

He paced up and down beside the canal. Lights in the distance twinkled among the trees, and glittered faintly on the water. Some people had stopped on the nearest bridge, and were laughing merrily.

"Why do I endure this existence?" he said, moodily. "My cousin Jacques, at Brussels, has often said he would gladly exchange his clerkship for mine. I have enough for myself and for Rosalie. It is hard to leave the children, but it is better to leave them for a time; at least, anything is better than this constant strife. I will not submit to it. I will tell Rosalie my intention; then the next time she finds fault with me, I will write to Jacques."

Louis Scherer was good-tempered, and soft, and weak; but he was selfish. It did not occur to him that in himself lay a means of soften-

ing and helping the irritable temper his cold, insouciant manner fretted. He represented to himself that Rosalie was not the girl he had married. He had more to vex him than she had, and yet he never began a quarrel, though she was so vain in manner and extravagant in dress.

"There is no doubt," said Monsieur Scherer, as he walked slowly back to his own door, "that I am an exceedingly ill-used husband." His next remark was not so true. "It is my own fault, for taking things so quietly. I will end the whole affair."

He went home, and found Rosalie sitting where he had left her. She had really been crying bitterly; but she would not let Louis guess this, and when he announced his determination, she listened in silence. Louis waited, but she did not speak; and he turned away, and went to see Legros.

Rosalie began to cry afresh. There was a tap at the door, and Captain Delabre came in. He was a fine-looking man, much taller than Louis Scherer, with a bold, swaggering air.

He seemed disturbed when he saw Madame Scherer crying.

"Madame is in sorrow," he said, awkwardly; and he sighed.

It seemed to Rosalie as if she had not fully realised her husband's unkindness till now. Louis, to whom she had given herself and her love, had actually threatened to desert her; and here was this grand gentleman—a grade higher in the army than Louis had ever been—troubled at even the sight of her grief.

Her heart felt bursting; it relieved itself in a fresh flow of sobs and tears.

The captain looked still more tender and sympathetic. He felt that he should like to punch the head of Louis Scherer.

"Pardon me, madame; may I not ask what is your sorrow?"

Rosalie's sobs grew less frequent.

"I cannot tell you, monsieur." A little quivering sob came; but she wiped her eyes, and felt ashamed of her wet face. "But—but I am the most miserable woman in the world."

"Ma foi, do not say so; it makes me too sad. But can I not make you happier?"

The Captain's voice was very soothing in its tenderness. "Ah! if Louis would only speak to me like that," she thought. "No, monsieur, no one can make me happy. My husband is angry with me, and I—" here her sobs began again.

Captain Delabre took Madame Scherer's hand.

"The man who can cause grief to so fair and angel-like a being—" and then he stopped abruptly. The door had opened, and Louis Scherer stood frowning on the threshold.

Captain Delabre did not let go the hand he held. He rose with admirable coolness.

"Bon soir, madame," he said. "I am so pleased to hear better

news of Madame de Vos. Ah ! ça, Scherer, where did you spring from ? If I were not pressed for time, I would stay and smoke a pipe with you ; but, as it is, au revoir ;" and he was gone before Scherer could recover himself.

Rosalie's eyes were dry at once. She looked angrily at her husband, but her heart was full of fear.

" So this is the way thou spendest the lonely evenings I hear so much of." Louis had come forward, and he stood facing his wife.

In reality, this was only the second visit of Captain Delabre ; but Rosalie felt too much outraged by her husband's suspicion to answer him quietly. She got up and faced him, pale and trembling with anger.

" It is too much, Louis. For six months, at least, thou hast left me every evening ; and am I to have no society or sympathy ? Even on the day of the fête, because I spoke to some of my friends, thou wert angry, and I had to get home as I could."

Louis had recovered his self-possession. He spoke in a calm, stern voice, which frightened his wife a little.

" Thou art unwise to recall that day, Rosalie. In all this cold estrangement which has come between us, I have tried to avoid reproaches, perhaps because I am so weary of thine ; but I was not blind at the fête. I saw thy vanity and folly, and not only with Delabre. If I left the fête alone, it was not till thou hadst twice refused to come with me. On that day, Rosalie, the choice was with thee between me and thy vanity ; now I choose between thee and peace. It is useless to believe that I am necessary to the happiness of a vain, inconstant woman."

At first she had softened, but the last words brought back all her pride.

" It is too wicked," she said, passionately, speaking more to herself than to her husband. " He is to spend all his time with others, and I am to be mute and meek, and I may not even listen to a sentence from another man. No, indeed, it is true ; thou art not necessary to my happiness. I cannot well be less happy than I am with thee."

" It is settled then—we separate ;" but Louis lingered, and kept his eyes fixed on the head so scornfully turned away.

Rosalie shrugged her shoulders, and then she went suddenly out of the room, ran upstairs to Madame de Vos's bed-chamber, and locked herself in.

VI.

THE fat, rosy-cheeked portress tapped at the door of the nuns' parlour in the convent of the New Jerusalem.

" A note for the Sœur Marie," she said, when she had been bidden to come in.

" For the Sœur Marie ?" and then a little chorus of wonder and

gentle joking buzzed round the quiet, sweet-faced sister, who sat busily employed in repairing a point-lace petticoat, which would be wanted for the "month of Mary."

"The Mother is in her parlour," said the portress; and she held the door open with deep respect. The Sœur Marie, spite of her humble, retiring nature, had somehow inspired all those with whom she lived with a conviction of her saintliness.

She found the head of the convent reading in a room, whitewashed, like all the rest, but richer than the rest in pictures and statuettes, and other objects of religious art, loving gifts from the pupils educated in the convent. The Superior looked up from her book. She had a calm, peaceful face, not so sweet as that of the Sœur Marie, but fuller of intelligence. She took the note from the sister's hand and read it.

"Thou must go to her, my daughter." She smiled, but she looked troubled too. "Thou knowest I had always fears about our poor Rosalie. I fear this Monsieur Scherer must be worse than unkind to desert his wife and children."

"Bien, ma mère;" and then the Sœur put on the black veil she wore out of doors, and was soon on her way to the house beside the canal.

Rosalie's note to the Sœur Marie had been written impulsively in a moment of agonised remorse at having, as she thought, driven her husband away from her. In that moment all her love for Louis had come back. But she had calmed down from this mood; and when Sister Marie kissed her niece tenderly on the forehead, instead of the despairing penitent she expected, she saw Rosalie smiling, and seemingly quite indifferent. But the Sœur had lived too much among young girls to be easily deceived.

"Thou art sorrowful, Rosalie." Her niece blushed under the sweet, direct look of her truthful eyes. "What help can I give thee?"

Rosalie twisted her fingers together. She felt angry with herself, with the Sœur Marie, and with everyone.

"I do not know," she said fretfully. "I hardly know now why I wrote; only it seemed as if I must tell some one of the great wrong done me, and I could not let my father know. He would have said it was my fault, and so would the bonne-maman: it is always my fault with some people."

She tossed her head and laughed.

"When thou wrotest to me, it seemed as if thou wert very sorry for something." Here the Sœur waited a little. "What has happened, Rosalie, to make thy husband go away?"

"Thou had best ask him;" but there was such tender pity in the look that met hers that a sudden, unexpected sob came in the girl's throat. Next minute her head was on the sister's shoulder, and she was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"It's not my fault; Louis is so cold, so selfish; he is enough to break any woman's heart with his cool indifferent ways; and then because I let others talk to me and admire me—ever so little—just to sting him into being more loving—he says I am given up to vanity and folly, and he has left me."

The words came out in little broken groups between her deep-drawn sobs, but Sister Marie did not interrupt; she knew that the wound could not close while any poison lingered there.

Yet her pure soul was deeply troubled. She had thought of Rosalie as one of the sinless lambs of the convent flock, and to the Sœur Marie it seemed woeful that her young niece should even wish for the admiration of any man besides her husband.

"It is not my fault," said Rosalie again; and the words sounded like a question.

The good sister smiled.

"Mon enfant, the hardest thing to bear in life is our own blame—we are so lazy, we always try to make someone else carry it; and yet, Rosalie," she spoke more gravely, "the nature of love is to bear all for the sake of the one beloved, is it not?"

Rosalie did not understand, but she looked uneasy.

"Thou seest, my child"—the Sœur Marie spoke in a cheerful confiding voice, as if she were only full of quiet gossip—"we who call ourselves Christians have all got to bear our cross; is it not so? We have been shown the way to bear it, and if we will, we may strive to follow that way in every footstep; but it is useless to put our burden on others; each has his own."

Rosalie's head moved restlessly.

"There is no use, my aunt, in telling me all this. When I was at the convent even, I did not care for this sort of talk, and I like it less now. I can't understand it. I am not Clémence. She has no burden, I suppose, or else she would not be so happy. Ah, there are people who have not feeling enough to be unhappy."

She spoke bitterly, and Sister Marie sighed.

"I think it is because Clémence carries her burden willingly that she is able to be so bright and happy. If we think of a hardship, it grows heavier."

"But I do bear—see how much I have borne," Rosalie burst forth impetuously, carried out of her sulky reserve by her desire to justify herself. "Louis has left me evening after evening, and I have not complained."

"But have you been loving to him, Rosalie?—have you borne with him?—have you shown him that his happiness is your chief care?"

Rosalie's blue eyes opened widely and suddenly. That a quiet staid religieuse like her Aunt Marie should sit there instructing her in the art of loving her husband, seemed almost laughable.

"Of course I love him,"—here she gave a little toss of her frizzled

head,—“but I should be wanting in self-respect if I were to go on being just the same when he takes no care to make me happy.”

Sister Marie smiled.

“If you and Louis saw each other on opposite sides of the canal, you could not clasp hands across it, Rosalie. One of you must cross over the bridge and seek the other, must you not ?”

Rosalie grew red with anger.

“I mean no disrespect, my aunt, but I told the same to Clémence. Single women cannot judge for us who are married. Surely thou wouldest not have me follow Louis to Brussels and ask his pardon for what is his own fault ?”

“I would have thee do this: search thine own heart—thou knowest what I mean, Rosalie—and see if all blame rests with Louis; and if it does, remember those who are in the right are more ready to be reconciled than those who are in the wrong. If thou dost not write to thy husband, or go to seek him, I think thou wilt be unhappy, and sinful also.”

“It is too bad—too bad !” Rosalie stamped with vexation at the sight of her aunt’s serious face. “Every one is so unjust. I am always to blame.”

The Sister Marie did not answer; she asked after the children, and then she got up to go away.

“I will come again if thou wishest it, my dear child,” she said. “I fear I have not given comfort to-day.”

“At least, I am able to make thee sure of one thing,” said Rosalie; “I love Louis. I may not have told him so, but I feel it all the same, even when I am the most angry.”

Sister Marie smiled again.

“But then how is he to know it ? I do not think I should believe in the love of a person who spoke angrily to me. Love must show itself in deeds and words, or it cannot live. Good-bye, my dear child !”

And then she kissed Rosalie lovingly, and went back to the convent of the New Jerusalem.

“A good thing she has gone. I shall not be in a hurry to send for her again, indeed ;” and Rosalie dressed herself, and went out for a walk.

She could not help seeing that her neighbours stared at her. She saw two women put their heads together and whisper, and then they looked at her with eyes full of condemnation.

“Let them,” she said haughtily; and just then she came face to face with Captain Delabre. A burning flush rose in her face, she returned his greeting, and hurried on so fast that he could not find a pretext for speaking.

It was strange. Rosalie knew that her aunt, the Sœur Marie, was only a religieuse—a woman who, as Louis said, lived a shut-up secluded life, which deprived her of all power of judgment, and yet the Sœur’s words stuck like burs. Rosalie found herself pondering them even

after she went to bed that night. What was it she had said of love being shown in deeds and words?

"Love, what is this love?" thought Rosalie sleepily. "I love Louis—is not that enough? but what can the Sœur mean by showing love?"

VII.

It is a pouring wet morning. Louis Scherer sits in a café before his breakfast, listening to the drip, drip, on the verandah outside.

He has as much peace as he desires in his Brussels life, but he is not happy; there is a want at his heart which he never felt in his bachelor days.

He has just been asking himself this question over and over again. Would it not have been better to have spent some of his evenings, at least, with Rosalie?

"The great quarrel between us was about those visits to Legros," he said: "I might have tried to be more at home. I wonder how she takes my absence;" and then he thought of Captain Delabre, and he looked very angry.

His cousin Jacques had not been so much pleased to see him after all. He had found Louis a temporary employment, but not so congenial a post as that which Monsieur Scherer held at Bruges.

However, it was time to be at office work, and Monsieur Scherer stretched himself, yawned, and departed.

"A lady has been here," the porter said, as he passed into the office; "she seemed in a great hurry to see Monsieur, and she left this address."

A strange kind of expectation came to Louis Scherer, and he looked at the card and felt checked.

It had simply "Clémence de Vos," and the name of an hotel close by.

Louis's hand shook as he put the card in his pocket. Why had Clémence come? what tidings had she brought? He did not dare to think; he hurried on to the hotel.

Clémence came forward, and she held his hand while she spoke.

"I am come to fetch you home, Louis: I have bad news."

He could not speak—he only looked; there was shame as well as anxiety in his face.

"It is not Rosalie; she has been ill, but she is better. She would have come; but, Louis, she cannot leave home. Loulou is ill—very ill!"

"Tell me, he is not dead?" He spoke hoarsely; her pale sorrowful face had filled him with the sudden agony of a new fear. Was this mad freak of his to end in such a grief?

"No, he was living early this morning, when I started; but we must hasten, Louis, for I fear. It was a sudden attack—a kind of fit, and the doctor said I must be quick."

Louis followed mechanically, while Clémence led the way to the station ; he even let her take his ticket while he stood absorbed in his fast-growing dread.

Perhaps he had not known before how the child had got twined round his heart, but it seemed as if a mighty cord were tugging there, hurrying him to Bruges.

“Oh, that I had never left him !”

Over and over again came the thought, but no words. He leaned back beside Clémence ; he seemed to be listening to all she was saying, but at first he scarcely heard a syllable.

“Rosalie has been very ill,” said the soft, tender voice, “oh, so ill, Louis ; and they heard of her illness at the convent, and sent for me ; she is not strong yet. Louis, do you know why she wanted to get strong ?”

The direct question roused him ; he looked at Clémence.

“She wanted to go to you to ask you to come back, Louis ; she is very sorry, and she has been ill, I think, from grief.”

He did not answer ; his thoughts stayed a little while with Rosalie, but the strongest feeling in Louis Scherer’s heart was love for his children.

It seemed to him as if the train would never reach Bruges ; and when at last they were fairly on their way to his home, his agony grew so strong that he covered his face with his hands.

The door stood open ; Clémence went in and beckoned him to follow up the stairs along the gallery into his wife’s bed-room.

Rosalie was kneeling beside the bed, one arm round her child.

Loulou’s eyes were closed, but he opened them and looked at his mother.

He was so pale, so very still, but his father saw the purple rings under the dark widely opened eyes.

They were fixed on his mother.

“Kiss me,”—the little voice was so faint, so weary, that it sounded far, far off to the two listeners,—“and kiss papa when he comes : he will come—dear—dear mamma.”

The eyes shut and opened again.

There was a little faint fluttering, and Loulou was far away—away from his mother’s tears and his father’s agony of sorrow, and yet closely present, praying for them, it may be, in this their sore trial. . . .

Clémence stole softly out of the room. There was silence awhile, and then the man’s sorrow burst from him in deep struggling sobs.

Rosalie looked up ; she had not realized that her husband had indeed come back ; and in the unlooked-for joy her new sorrow was hushed. She went to him, took his hand and kissed it tenderly, then she clung to him.

“Louis, my Louis,” she whispered, “forgive me, wilt thou not ? I will try and love thee as well as Loulou loved.”

VIII.

THE rainy weather has passed away ; the sky is bright and clear, with just a few soft grey-tinted clouds to take hardness from its intense blue ; but those days of heavy rain have robbed the lilac flowers of their bloom, and made the gueldres rose blossoms hang their heads like a drenched mop.

But the birds in the cages sing out loudly that the rain has brought a more genial warmth into the old courtyard ; and the vine leaves have also found this out, and are shaking themselves free of their brown sheaths with surprising quickness. The fountain too sparkles merrily in the sunshine, and seems to be calling for its playfellows, the gold-fish, to disport themselves in its basin.

Clémence stands waiting in the middle of the courtyard ; her mourning dress looks sad in contrast to the brightness overhead, but there is no sorrow in her sweet earnest dark eyes.

Every now and then they are turned to the arched passage with an expectant look in them.

She is not looking at Eulalie, who stands outside the window of the little sitting-room, with her arms a-kimbo, chatting with Madame de Vos. The cook of the "Ours d'Or" has evidently softened towards the visitor ; she is actually instructing her at this moment on the best method of cooking chaffinches.

A sound of wheels at last rattling over the round stones of the Place, Eulalie retreats precipitately to her kitchen. It does not comport with her self-respect, that her master should find her chatting with her old foe. Madame de Vos too shuts down the window, to keep up her character as an invalid.

Clémence has gone to meet her father under the archway ; he draws her hand fondly within his arm, and they come back together into the courtyard.

Clémence looks full of expectation.

"It is all right," Monsieur smiles down into her questioning eyes. "I had a long talk with Louis, and also with Rosalie. They seem very happy. The most hopeful sign about her is her loving gratitude to thee, Clémence : she says, if she is happy in this new life with Louis, she owes it all to thy unselfish love."

"Hush, my father ;" but Clémence's soft eyes are full of tears.

"I am not afraid of spoiling thee, my darling," he kisses her forehead, "but I should like to know thy secret, Clémence ; it could have been no easy matter to win poor froward Rosalie to feel as she now feels—that a wife is made for a husband, not a husband for a wife."

"I have no secret," laughs Clémence, softly ; "I only love Rosalie dearly, and I think she believes it now."

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